The Washington Monthly

OCTOBER 1982/$2

NICHOLAS LEMANN on Scrambled Eggheads

ART imitates ART: LEVINE on BUCHWALD

WILLIAM GREIDER on The Story Behind The Stockman Story

A Labor Leader Calls For Detente With Industry

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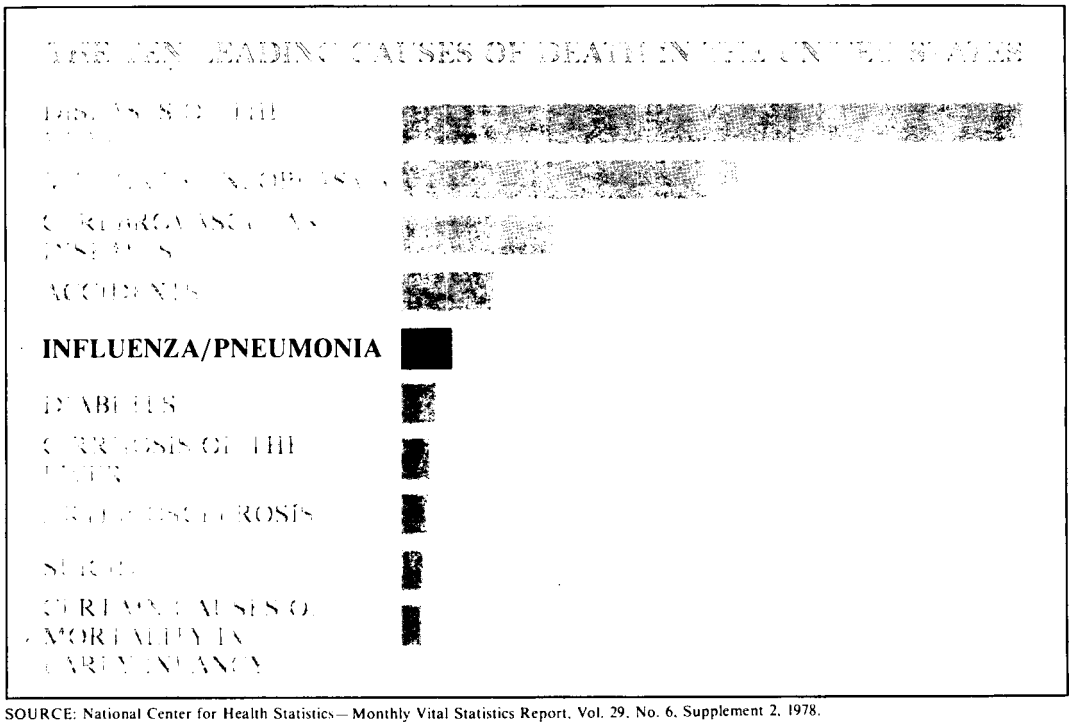
The disease that will not die... an untold story.



SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics—Monthly Vital Statistics Report, Vol. 29, No. 6, Supplement 2, 1978.

Many of us believe that pneumonia is a disease of the past—long ago conquered by antibiotics. The fact is that bacteria-caused pneumonia strikes between 400,000 to 500,000 people, causing from 20,000 to 50,000 deaths each year, according to U.S. Government reports. A high percentage of these illnesses and deaths can be prevented—by a vaccine that has been developed, tested and proven effective.

A few million people are immunized; many millions more should be. Unfortunately, the very people most susceptible to pneumococcal pneumonia—the elderly, those with a history of chronic ailments, such as respiratory illnesses, heart disease, diabetes and others—may not know about the vaccine. They need to be informed.

Public attention, mainly through the media, has been mobilized to fight against disease—notably polio, other childhood diseases, hypertension, glaucoma, TB, and others. The time is now for pneumococcal pneumonia to be on that hit list.

Lederle

For information about pneumococcal pneumonia vaccine, call or write:
Public Affairs Department, Lederle Laboratories,
Wayne, New Jersey 07470. 201/831-4684.

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LETTERS

Asbestos Can Be

In his June column ["Tilting at Windmills"] Charles Peters describes me as a former public interest lawyer who has fallen from grace in his eyes because my firm represents an industry he doesn't like. Let me explain what this representation is all about.

For the last year, we have worked with insurance companies, court reform groups, labor unions, and the asbestos and other industries to develop legislation to create a "no-fault" compensation system for victims of occupational disease. We do not defend asbestos claims; rather, our task has been to find a politically feasible alternative to the wasteful tort litigation system which shortchanges sufferers of occupational diseases with long latency periods. Senator Gary Hart and Congressman George Miller have introduced bills on this theme.

While occupational diseases caused by exposure to radiation, chemicals, dusts, and other substances are increasing, asbestos disease is the first to reach the level of crisis. Between six and ten thousand workers and former workers die from it every year, and this toll will continue to the year 2000 and beyond.

Less than half of these workers get any benefits from the existing tort and workers compensation systems. Even for those workers who do benefit, the system is grossly inefficient. For every dollar received by a successful claimant, $6 goes to pay legal transaction costs. Indirect costs are large as well. With over 13,000 asbestos cases pending in the courts, this flood of litigation not only subjects asbestos claimants to years of delay, but bogs down disposition of all other civil cases as well.

Estimates of future litigation costs for asbestos claims are in tens of *billions* of dollars. Already these costs have contributed to the bankruptcy or reorganization of two corporate defendants. If more companies go under, future victims will be denied recovery from any private sector source and will have to turn to public assistance programs for relief.

Concern about the appalling waste, delay, and unfairness of the existing tort and workers compensation systems has led to a search for legislative remedies by a variety of groups. The manufacturers and insurance companies seek predictability and an alternative to skyrocketing product liability costs; the workers want bigger and faster settlements; the judges want less congested courts. Even the federal government is beginning to face up to its responsibility for exposing millions of workers to asbestos in wartime shipyards.

It should be possible to devise a legislative formula that requires all responsible parties to pay their fair share to diseased workers. In view of the intolerable status quo, it seems important to try. And it's obvious that any politically feasible solution requires cooperation by industry, government, labor leaders, and the workers themselves.

HARRISON WELLFORD
Washington, D.C.

Firewater

Apropos your "Ships That Melt" ["Tilting at Windmills," July/August], I offer this bit of information gleaned from my friendly insurance agent, who is also a naval reserve officer. He says they started making the superstructures of aluminum but found it corroded on contact with salt water and didn't look at all shipshape.

The solution, according to my friend, was to add a bit of magnesium to the aluminum alloy. If he's right, you don't have ships that melt, you have ships carrying a big Fourth of July sparkler on top. I broke into the air force with the B-36 bomber, which was made of magnesium. I well remember seeing one of them burn in the snow at Loring Air Force Base after a crash. I wonder if there is anything that can put out such a fire.

SAMUEL PENNINGTON
Waldoboro, Maine

Shock Treatment

Your use of the picture of a corpse with your "Trial and Tribulation" article [Hal Riedl, July/August] was grotesque. It is reasonable to believe that the vast majority of your readers have either seen a corpse before or could well imagine what one looks like. Consequently, the photo of the deceased Mr. Johnson does little, if anything, to inform the public.

I shall consider this incident to be a temporary aberration, and will pray for the quick return of your usual good taste. Barring that occurrence, the staff of your publication might find more suitable employment as ghouls.

JOHN WAWREK
Tucson, Arizona

The editors reply:

We decided to use this photograph precisely because of its shock value. We believe the public *isn't* sufficiently conscious of the true effects of violent crime. Wrapped up in the legal abstractions of a murder trial, it's easy to lose sight of the fact that someone is actually *dead*. Crime and punishment aren't abstract concepts, and it was our belief that this admittedly grotesque reminder of what really happens when our criminal justice system fails could best convey this.

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Heresies on Trial

In "Ten Heresies That Could Save the Economy," [July/August] Jonathan Alter argues that arrangements in which employees agree to trade wages for ownership interests in their firms would help keep inflation down and productivity up, while at the same time giving workers a fair return on their efforts. Naturally, I could not agree more.

Alter writes, however, that Congress rejected exactly such a plan for Chrysler. In fact, the Chrysler Loan Guarantee Act contains a provision introduced by former Senator Donald Stewart requiring that Chrysler provide employees with $162.5 million in stock over a four-year period. The first two installments have already been distributed. Workers now own about 15 percent of the company—far more than the next largest shareholder.

This same arrangement has been used at a number of other companies, such as Pan Am and Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel. There is some speculation that it may become a key element in current talks between steel management and labor.

Employee ownership provides a unique mixing of free enterprise and social justice. Better yet, studies of companies owned in part or in full by their employees show that these firms are substantially more profitable and productive than their conventional counterparts.

COREY ROSEN
Arlington, Virginia

Mr. Rosen is executive director of the National Center for Employee Ownership.

Money Marketeers

Does it really matter if one saves instead of spends? Money in money market funds represents money that someone borrows and then spends for goods and services. Even much of the money in government securities goes to provide transfer payments that are ultimately spent. Whether the money is spent or saved, it remains in circulation.

Can you explain to me why spending would produce more favorable results in the end than saving?

MARCUS F. KOOSMANN
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

The editor replies:

The vast bulk of money market funds ends up as short-term paper. In other words, the kind of saving we're getting now does not contribute to new plants and new jobs. Neither does trading in existing stock issues, which is what most of the recent Wall Street explosion is about. Consumer spending, on the other hand, creates the demand for products that inspires investors to make the kind of long-term commitment we need.

The Washington Monthly

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TILTING AT WINDMILLS

If you're planning to commit a crime, do it in New York. Even if you're caught and convicted, all you have to do is appeal. If you doubt me, consider two recent cases in which a convicted felon was freed by New York appellate courts.

In one the court voided the guilty plea of a Brooklyn dentist who admitted he had sexually abused a patient. What caused the court to free him? Had vicious cops coerced a confession from an innocent man? No, the dentist had been filmed in the act by a camera that investigators had installed in the ceiling of his office. His advances were such that the undercover woman investigator posing as a patient had to be rescued at the last minute by detectives.

The fatal defect in the state's case, according to the judge, was that the camera was installed seven days after the warrant authorizing it had expired. Think about this one for a while. The dentist had admitted guilt. What difference does it make when the camera was installed? The evidence it could have provided was not even used in court because the guilty plea made it unnecessary.

Another New York appellate court overturned the burglary conviction of a man who had a record of 21 arrests and ten convictions because the prosecutor had called him a liar during the trial. Two police officers testified they had seen the defendant leaving an apartment building carrying a television set. The defendant testified that he had not seen any television set until he noticed one, nearby, as the officers approached him. If the officers were telling the truth, as the jury had a right to conclude, the defendant was indeed a liar.

The court didn't disagree with the jury's findings: "This evidence was certainly sufficient for a jury to convict appellant of the crime of burglary." It simply didn't like the idea of the prosecutor calling the burglar a liar even if it agreed he was one.

Behind this kind of nonsense is a culture of the judicial system that makes the legal process a challenging game in which lawyers vie with one another to discover clever new grounds for getting criminals off the hook, and judges, forgetting their duty to protect the public from crime, join in the spirit of the sport by rewarding the clever lawyers with reversals. . . .

Judges so much enjoy watching the game of law played that they are willing to have the rest of us pay for it. The Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia recently awarded $90,000 in fees to lawyers for the Sierra Club in a suit brought under the Environmental Protection Act. The lawyers hadn't even won the case, but the court ruled they had made "a substantial contribution to the interpretation of the act."

Their take was modest indeed, compared to that of the lawyers who represented Shyamala Rajender in her sex-discrimination case against the University of Minnesota. She got $100,000; her lawyers, $2 million. A federal judge awarded the fees based on an hourly rate of $240 for one firm and $375 for another. The trial took 11 weeks. The fees were enough to cover, at those high-for-even-Wall Street rates, 6,041 hours, or 755 lawyer-days. . . .

If the appellate courts aren't making the streets of New York sufficiently dangerous for you, there's another hazard to contend with: crumbling masonry facades that fall on

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pedestrians. After a couple of people were killed, the city council enacted an ordinance requiring landlords to have their buildings inspected. But 40 percent of the landlords have failed to comply. So when you're walking down Broadway, remember to keep your eyes looking up (and your hand on your wallet). . . .

If you have faith in civil service tests, ponder what is happening to 76 provisional youth counselors who were hired by the state of New York during the period between June 1975 and October 1981, when no civil service test was given for the job. They are threatened with dismissal because they failed or received poor grades on the October test. Yet some of the counselors, according to *The New York Times*, had performed well enough to be promoted to supervisory jobs and others have worked for years without receiving a complaint.

Incidentally, of all those tested in October, 76 percent of the whites got a passing grade, but only 40 percent of the Hispanics and 34 percent of the blacks. . . .

Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin gives Americans a very misleading idea of what most Soviet diplomats are like. He is both skilled and tactful; the others are so hamhanded that they constitute our secret weapon in the struggle for the hearts and minds of the world. A friend recently wrote me describing a visit to Oxford last year by the deputy Soviet ambassador in London:

"One student documented some of the repression against Jews in the Soviet Union. The deputy ambassador replied: " 'You Jews are all alike, you always want to get on top of everybody.'

"One student brought up the repression of the Ukrainian Catholic church. The diplomat replied that 'the Ukranian Catholics were fascists and Hitlerites.' He did not explain why the repression continues 36 years after the war.

"Another student mentioned that his family had fled from Lithuania after most had been massacred by the Soviets. The diplomat said, 'How could they leave without a visa?' ". . .

Beverly Hills. Palm Beach. Southampton. Each has one Elizabeth Arden salon. Even Chicago, New York, and San Francisco have only one. Guess what city is affluent enough to have two? Washington. . . .

Do I worry too much about snobbery? Perhaps, but a new magazine has decided that the envelope copy that will persuade potential subscribers to open their direct-mail solicitations is, in very large type, "CLASS," and beneath it: "A charter invitation to a magazine that's got it and wants to help you get it, too! ". . .

In case you missed it, *The Progressive*'s April issue contained a marvelous article called "The Party's Over in Dixon, Ill.," describing what Reaganomics has done to the president's hometown. "I'd say maybe 30 percent of our people are unemployed now," one union official told the author, Mary Williams. . . .

Not long ago Robert Coram of *The Atlanta Journal* went to Fort Bragg to watch a public demonstration of army and air force weapons. He found that "expensive high technology weapons either failed or operated far below their advertised capabilities. . . while older, simpler or combat-proven weapons provided accurate and dependable firepower."

A military announcer introduced the F16 as having "the best avionics and bomb delivery system available today," and this magazine believes it is clearly more desirable than the F18. Still, Coram saw three of the four F16s miss their targets, two by more than half a mile.

The TOW missile, which is supposed to have a 90-percent kill probability, missed its target during two launches from the ground and two from Cobra helicopters at less than half the missile's claimed range. On the other hand, the A-10 and F-4 planes and the M-47 antitank missile all were on target. . . .

By the way, have you heard how the army got the Pershing II missile to hit the target? "It altered the target area," according to the General Accounting Office, "by emplacing aluminum reflectors in a precise geometrical pattern to insure that the target had a distinctive radar signature.". . .

I'm mad at the Campbell Soup Company. They are telling our readers that we were wrong ("the statement is unfounded") in saying that Campbell lobbied to block legislation requiring sodium-content labeling. Here is what happened, as described by Paul Taylor of *The Washington Post*:

"From the start, the name of the game was to get Rep. James J. Florio to do as the jingle advises and 'remember the soup.' It was industry lobbying at its most sophisticated: low-key, light-handed, lightning-quick, behind the scenes, constituent-

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based, and targeted at a single swing legislator who held a key vote on a touchy consumer issue.

"And in the end it all came together. On the eve of a scheduled subcommittee vote last month, Florio bowed to the wishes of the food industry interests in his district, led by Campbell Soup Co., and withdrew his proxy in support of a measure to require that foods be labeled for sodium content.

"Because he would have been the tenth 'yes' vote on the 20-member House subcommittee on health and the environment, his move effectively killed the bill."

Campbell does have a good record of sodium labeling its own soups, but it obviously does not want laws that might require not only the sodium contents but the health consequences of those contents revealed as well. . . .

Speaking of lobbying, AT&T may have come up with a whole new approach. According to a newsletter published by the North American Telephone Association, an organization of AT&T competitors, AT&T is denying those competitors access to expert witnesses to testify before congressional committees and regulatory bodies. How? By buying them all up first.

Last year AT&T and the affiliated companies of the Bell system spent $3.5 million in fees to professors and consultants. Professor William Baumol of Princeton, who received $41,775 of that sum, told *The New York Times:*

"The normal pattern has been for the company to ask me to testify. I would tell them what I was prepared to say, and if they thought it was appropriate, I testified—if not, I did not testify.". . .

I welcome the attack that thoughtful economists and business writers have begun to make on the inflated salaries of corporate executives. The *Fortune* article that received our Monthly Journalism Award in this issue was followed by an excellent series by Linda Grant in the *Los Angeles Times.* Among the absurdities she cites is the $1.4 million a year Archie McCardell was paid as he led International Harvester to the brink of bankruptcy. . . .

The August issue of *California* magazine has an article called "The Burglar Cops of Hollywood." It seems the officers would rush to the scene of a reported break-in and steal on their own before making their reports. When action was slack, they would create their own opportunities by throwing a brick through a store window. This would then trigger alarms to which they would rush to respond in time to loot the premises before the owner arrived. You can just see the cops standing around filling out reports, saying "You really need better security."

Buried in the article was one of those details *Washington Monthly* readers relish: One of the cops, Jack Myers, was caught red-handed carrying cash and merchandise from a store. When he was interrogated at police headquarters, he requested, and was paid, overtime for the hours of interrogation. . . .

In a similar triumph of civil service mentality, George Collatos has just asked for and received the first installment of his retirement pension from the city of Boston, even though he resigned from his job just two days before he was convicted of extortion. The extortion was carried out in the course of his performance of his public duties. . . .

The Reagan administration, in its dedicated search for ways to cut the budget, somehow managed to rack up a 66-percent increase in first-class air travel last year. The White House has become sensitive to the effect of this kind of news in an election year and is cutting back its own travel expenses. But the belt-tightening is completely consistent with other Reagan policies: the lower-level staff is being asked to double up in hotel rooms; the higher officials retain their single rooms.

The doubling up was ordered by the White House's new master of perks, a 26-year-old named John Rogers, who reports to James Baker and is fast becoming the most disliked man on the White House staff. . . .

In the new book, *Reagan's Ruling Class,* written by Ronald Brownstein and Nina Easton, associates of Ralph Nader, here is what one high administration official is quoted as saying about defense spending:

"The identification of a threat to security does not automatically require an expenditure in the defense budget to neutralize it. The nation's total resources being limited, it is necessary to consider what is being given up to meet the threat. The defense budget must be seen not only in terms of what we must defend against but what we have to defend. The more we take from the common wealth for its defense, the smaller it

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becomes."

The speaker: none other than Caspar Weinberger when he was wearing another hat as budget director in the early seventies. . . .

Two articles that appeared last summer were perfect examples of the kind of bland, un-self-critical liberalism that constitutes the point of view of so many of the stories in *The Washington Post*. Both happen to be by David Hoffman, who is on the whole an excellent reporter. So are many of the other people who work at the *Post*. Their problem is not lack of talent. It is the blinders they wear.

The first article was about postal subsidies for non-profit organizations. Reflecting the conventional liberal assumption that if profit is evil, non-profit must be virtuous, the piece reeked of bias in favor of the subsidy. It failed to give the slightest hint that some of the publications receiving the non-profit subsidy, which is paid for by the taxpayers, are among the nation's richest—the *National Geographic* and the *Smithsonian*, for example.

Even more maddening was Mr. Hoffman's report headlined, "Reagan Asks Lesser Raise in U.S. Pay." The story proceeded to recite that Reagan was recommending a four-percent pay raise "instead of the 18.47-percent increase that a study found would be required to match comparable pay levels in the private sector." The article then quotes a goverment employees' union leader: "We don't like it worth a damn. . . . Federal employees are falling behind."

Hoffman goes on to solemnly inform his reader that "federal law requires that government salaries be comparable with those for similar jobs in the private sector."

At no point in his story does Hoffman suggest that there is the slightest question about the way the government determines comparability. But there are, to put the matter as gently as possible, several questions to be asked. Among the less confidence-inspiring aspects of the system is that the surveys of private sector pay and the initial recommendation for pay increases are made by government employees themselves, who are, after all, the potential beneficiaries of the process. The comparison is not made on the basis of comparing say, what an accountant in government does against what an accountant in private industry does. The survey compares what the government accountant's job description *says* he does with what the private accountant actually does.

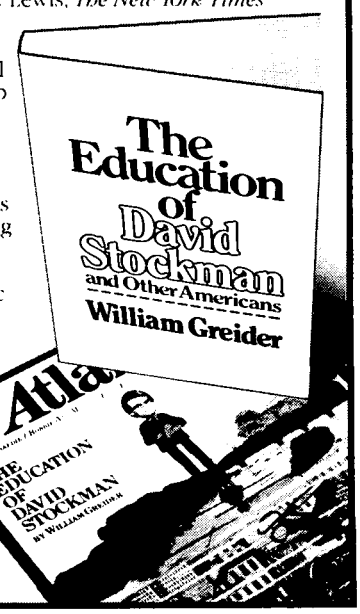
Now, anyone with a shred of sophistication about the federal service knows these job descriptions are among the masterworks of modern fiction, endowing the average file clerk, to paraphrase a veteran bureaucrat, Leonard Reed, with responsibilities before which a Harvard M.B.A. would quail. For example, Reed notes, a GS-14, of whom there are 55,000 in the federal service, may spend his day leafing through old reports and looking out the window, while his job description says he has "extensive and frequent contacts with key officials and top management of the same and other government agencies, state agencies, private industry, and other groups in an effort to resolve different viewpoints regarding key matters of management and organization."

The outside jobs surveyed

"The essential book on Washington today."

—Anthony Lewis, *The New York Times*

When Reagan's budget director told *The Atlantic*, "None of us really understands what's going on with all those numbers," he dropped a bomb that is still exploding inside the Washington establishment. Now William Greider, the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who wrote that historic article, brilliantly analyzes its significance. This candid, hard-hitting book, which includes the *Atlantic* article in its entirety, takes us below the calm surface of political rhetoric to show us the chaos of decision making at the top.



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match only 23 percent of the federal jobs—or job descriptions. According to the General Accounting Office, the jobs surveyed "contain disproportionate numbers of jobs which were highly paid in the private sector." When Reed last looked into the comparability issue for us, he found only manufacturing and retail firms with more than 250 employees were surveyed, eliminating 96 percent of the manufacturing and 98 percent of the retail firms. Last, but far from least, also ignored by the comparability survey is that the average federal employee has much greater job security (even with the Reagan RIFs) and a much more generous retirement plan than his private sector counterpart.

The failure to explore this other side of the comparability story has, to the best of my knowledge, been true of the *Post* since the comparability act was passed in 1962. The two exceptions are Meg Greenfield on the editorial page, who occasionally expresses skepticism of the case for ever-increasing federal salaries and pensions, and Mike Causey, who, even though he writes a column in the paper's back pages called "Federal Diary" that is pro-civil service, does have the integrity to acknowledge now and then the holes in the civil servants' case.

There remains the question of why the rest of the *Post* is so resolutely ignorant about such central facts of life in the city it covers. Even if the reporters are innocent, why don't at least some of the editors of its news sections know enough about the government to guide the reporters toward the right questions? One possible explanation occurred to me one night at dinner with two prominent *Post* editors. I had innocently been discussing how most federal workers were overpaid—with salaries in the $50,000 range common for jobs that had less responsibility than a supermarket manager's—when I began to detect steam escaping from the nostrils of the wife of one of the editors, who was seated next to me. It turned out she was a government employee. So was the wife of the other editor. . . .

I hate to spoil that anecdote by saying I don't really think the wives' self-interest is the explanation. There are many factors, the most important of which is the editors' lack of experience in their own government, the kind of experience that would give them a feel for the rituals of the bureaucracy, its institutional imperative, its confidence games.

This lack is, I believe, true of almost all the great newspapers and newsmagazines. Occasionally one finds World War II and Korean War veterans—of course, almost none of the editors are Vietnam veterans—who understand the military bureaucracy, but they seldom realize how similar the games are on the civilian side. Obviously both news organizations and aspiring journalists must think about how to acquire real government experience so that at least some of the people observing from the outside can do so with an insider's understanding. . . .

Except for a handful of programs, the federal government is prohibited from accepting the services of unpaid volunteers. This is outrageous. The federal deficit is soaring. Why not accept free help? Why not, indeed, is the answer of Rep. Jerry Solomon, who is sponsoring a Volunteering in Government Act. Urge your congressman to support it.

I doubt very much if, for example, the government is going to be able to afford the immense cost of health care for the aged—remember what Phil Keisling predicted would happen in veterans' hospitals alone—without the help of a large number of volunteers. . . .

If I criticize *The Washington Post* for its failures, I should praise it when it does show sophistication in its coverage of the government. One such case was a story by George Wilson that came when many of us were moaning about the gigantic defense budget that had sailed through Congress in August.

Cease fretting, counseled Wilson. That was merely an *authorization* bill. The Pentagon doesn't get the money to spend until the *appropriation* bill is passed. Wilson says Joseph Addabbo, chairman of the House appropriations subcommittee concerned with defense spending, is predicting that he can get at least $11 billion removed from the bill. It's unlikely that the appropriation will have passed by the time you read this, so this is another reason to write your congressman, now. . . .

Ronald Reagan's September speech on the Palestinians may have spared this country a frightening onslaught of terrorism. After its defeat in Lebanon, it seemed clear that terrorism was the only remaining outlet for the wild frustration and anger in the ranks of the PLO. It may still be a danger, but at least Ronald Reagan has done what

(continued on page 60)

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One of a series of messages in support of a brighter future for America.

WE NEED A 3-MINUTE TAX FORM

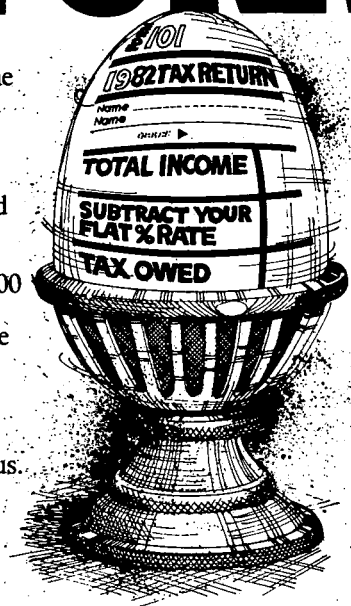
The federal income tax system is too complicated, too costly, too unintelligible, and plainly unfair.

Taxpayers are mad about it.

The tax law itself consists of more than 2,000 pages. To interpret the law, the Internal Revenue Service has issued nearly 10,000 pages of federal regulations. Case law and interpretive rulings are even more voluminous.

Our tax system is virtually impossible to understand.

The General Accounting Office recently reported that Americans spend approximately one billion hours every year just filling out federal tax forms. That's absurd. No wonder people are angry. That represents one billion hours of lost American productivity.



The federal income tax system is creating an atmosphere of dissension among taxpayers at various income levels and a desire on the part of many Americans to beat the "system."

Hence the reports that several billion dollars in taxes were evaded last year by otherwise honest citizens.

Two changes to the tax code need to be considered:

1. Eliminate all tax deductions, exemptions, credits, shelters, and loopholes; and

2. Institute a flat rate.

Even a graduated flat rate would be better than the present system. Let's stop punishing those who work and rewarding those who don't.

Let's develop a fair system with a flat tax rate, no exemptions, and no Gestapo-like I.R.S. tactics.

If all tax shelters and deductions were eliminated, the government could then take one chunk right off the top of taxpayers' income and leave them alone.

That idea surely deserves consideration.

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REPORTERS AND • THEIR SOURCES

Mutual Assured Seduction

by William Greider

As the author of that notorious article on David Stockman,* I confess that I was educated, too, by the experience. I assumed that Stockman's candor would provoke political controversy, enraging his political opponents and embarrassing the Reagan administration, but I was not prepared for the full tempest that followed.

I learned, first of all, what every experienced politician already knows: the whirling eye of the news media is an uncontrollable organism that creates its own eccentric versions of what happens. After many years as a reporter, asking and demanding that other people explain themselves, I also found myself suddenly on the receiving end and I felt a bit queasy (public officials might say this would be good medicine for every reporter to take). Many of the inquiring reporters were in too much of a hurry to read the article and wanted me to summarize it for them over the telephone (I winced at the memory of having done the same on occasion). All asked the same questions, not about the content, but about the personalities involved. Why did Stockman do it? Why did he tell you all those things? Some of them asked: Why did *you* do it? How could you save all those sensational nuggets for so many months and not print them in the daily newspaper? I would try to explain the "ground rules" under which the interviews had taken place and the context of Stockman's agreement. But it soon became clear to me, as every politician must already understand, that complicated explanations do not hold up well if the inquiring reporter is seeking something brief and pithy. It *was* an education.

Even more painful were the accounts in the press and on television describing the article's contents. I watched—with what can only be called wry innocence—as the daily news reports gave brutal summaries of what I had written. A long and complex narrative, constructed to preserve subtlety and ambiguity, was swiftly rendered into tart little capsules, the choicest nuggets of "news" that might provoke and embarrass. I could hardly quarrel with the accuracy of the technique (having practiced it myself for many years), but it disappointed me. I had expected, after the original flurry of reaction and controversy, that some attention might be given to the deeper questions raised by Stockman's account of governing. A practicing politician would say that I was remarkably naive.

In time, as I pondered the reactions, I came to realize that perhaps this episode revealed something deeper about the press, a contradiction in its own reflexes and behavior that helps explain why the news from Washington seems so confusing—and, indeed, uncommunicative—to many Americans. As a participant, I was right in the middle of

William Greider is Washington editor of Rolling Stone *and a former national editor of* The Washington Post. *This article is adapted from his new book,* The Education of David Stockman and Other Americans, *E.P. Dutton,* *© 1982 William Greider.*

*"The Education of David Stockman," *Atlantic*, November 1981.

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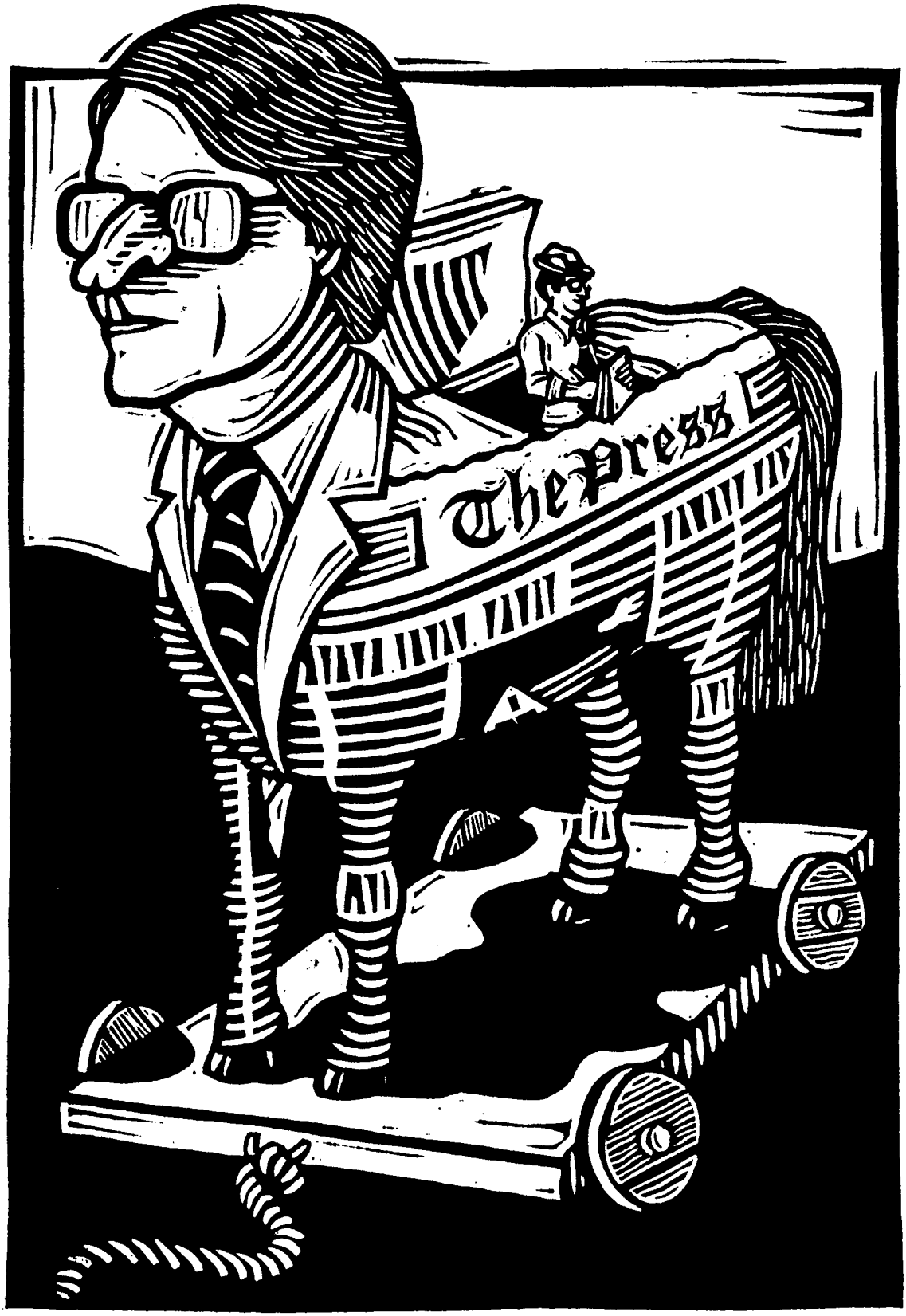

David Street, Streetworks Studio

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'Interviewing David Stockman on fiscal policy at 7:30 in the morning is a daunting experience. George Will has likened it to talking to a "Gatling Gun who has studied with Dale Carnegie."'

that contradiction (or on both sides of it), and perhaps this allows me to see and describe the weakness more clearly. It has to do with the operating conventions that press and public officials have accepted among themselves, each for his own ends, and how those conventions serve only a very limited market—the elite audience of government insiders—while obscuring things for the larger audience of ordinary citizens. There are self-imposed barriers built into the daily news that diminish the quality of reality that is conveyed. The Stockman narrative leaped over those fences and inadvertently revealed the inadequacies of what gets told on a daily basis.

In the original storm of controversy over the article, David Stockman had lunch with the president; he apologized for his indiscretions and offered his resignation. The president kept him on as budget director, and, despite many predictions to the contrary, Stockman continued to be effective in the job, though dramatically less visible. His trip to the Oval Office, Stockman said, was "more in the nature of a visit to the woodshed after supper." (My own visit to the "woodshed" was less dramatic; it took the form of a general chorus from the news media that I had betrayed the sacred principles of news—"Editor Scoops Own Paper," as one headline put it.)

In his appearance before the White House press, Stockman provided a mild and generous account of what had happened in our arrangement. "... I think there's been some misunderstanding. Bill Greider is an old friend of mine and has been a long-time intellectual adversary. We have ... what has occurred here is simply an honest but rather large misunderstanding as to the terms of the relationship we had. I understood it to be off the record. He understood it to be off the record for uses in the newspaper over the period in which our conversations occurred. It's a misunderstanding, but it is not an act of bad faith on his side nor on mine. Sometimes large misunderstandings occur in life with very unfortunate and tragic effects. And I think this is one of them."

I appreciated his generosity, but I did not think there was a misunderstanding. Neither, it seems fair to note, did many of those familiar with the ways of Washington. Experienced politicians and reporters found it implausible that a ranking public official would participate in so many lengthy tape-recorded interviews (18 in all) and afterward pose for photographs, and yet continue to believe that he would not be quoted by name. In any case, Stockman's flattering references to me—an "old friend" and "long-time intellectual adversary"—stimulated some exotic theorizing about his psychological motivations.

Stockman, it was suggested in an article by one curbstone analyst, was perhaps enthralled by the relationship, using the sympathetic presence of an older journalist as a confessional, a place to speak forbidden truths and seek personal expiation for the sins of Reaganomics. Or was he trying to rewrite history in advance? Others saw it in slightly more lofty terms: here were two serious students of government, drawn together by mutual respect and a zest for intellectual combat, holding their own private series of earnest seminars on the fate of the federal government. I rather liked that last explanation; it made us sound so noble. My wife, who has never met David Stockman but understands me well enough, brought me back to earth. "Come on," she says. "It was two naughty little boys breaking the rules to see if they could get away with it."

She was right, of course, about the psychology. Both Stockman and I, operating from different roles, had done the unexpected and effectively ignored the prevailing, unwritten conventions that govern the behavior of both press and politicians in Washington. This was offensive, in different ways, to both fraternities, though Stockman endured considerably more criticism than I did. Together, we violated the standard operating context in which public officials communicate through the press. By talking honestly, Stockman

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contradicted the rhetorical claims and slogans his own colleagues were offering for their program. By recounting Stockman's genuine thoughts in a comprehensive manner, I was effectively refuting the simple and shallow version of reality that the news created in its daily slices.

To understand this, however, one has to appreciate that neither of us entered into our unique arrangement with the expressed intention of changing the "rules" or even offending them. I emphasize the homely point: At the outset, Stockman and I were participating in a fairly routine transaction of Washington, a form of submerged communication which takes place regularly between selected members of the press and the highest officials of government. Our mutual motivation, despite our different interests, was crassly self-serving. It did not need to be spelled out between us. I would use him and he would use me. The fancy name for this is symbiosis, which perhaps gives it more dignity than it deserves. But symbiosis is an elementary mode of operation in the ecology of Washington affairs. Whether it exists between politicians and reporters, lobbyists and congressmen, bureaucrats and private interest groups, the functional politics of the city involves complicated webs of such informal relationships, transactions for sharing access and information which go largely unobserved.

BREAKFAST WITH CAPTAIN NUMBER CRUNCH

In the fall of 1980, after Ronald Reagan's dramatic election victory, it became clear to me that Reagan would launch a powerful offensive against the status quo, and that Stockman was his likely choice for the pivotal role of budget director. I suggested to Stockman that we begin meeting regularly to discuss "off the record" the flow of events in which he would be a leading participant. I appealed to his sense of history. I invoked our mutual interest in the larger questions of the modern welfare state and the conservative reform movement of which he was a leading voice. I promised that he would not be quoted in the daily newspaper; the material would be saved for comprehensive treatment at a later time when we both agreed it was appropriate. My obligation would be to produce a full and serious account of Stockman's narrative, an honest piece that would respect the complexity of the subject (an obligation I believe I kept).

Stockman accepted and we began our periodic

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conversations, usually every other week, over nine months. I would call his office on Friday afternoon and ask if I was on the schedule. We had an early breakfast at the Hay-Adams Hotel, across Lafayette Park from the White House. In time, when the waiters saw me enter with my tape recorder, they would turn down the Muzak so the background music would not intrude on my recordings of our conversations.

Stockman and I were "old friends" only in the limited social usage of Washington, where anyone who has met someone twice at dinner parties is apt to call him an "old friend." We did not socialize together or play tennis on Saturday mornings, but we had known each other for several years. As a reporter, I first sought him out when he was a bright young congressman from Michigan. I had been attracted by his brilliant critiques of modern liberalism, published in *Public Interest* and elsewhere. Later, as an editor, I commissioned several provocative articles by him for *The Washington Post*'s Sunday edition. Stockman understood that I agreed with some essential elements of his political analysis, particularly the incoherence and corrupting reflexes of interest-group liberalism; he also knew well enough, from my own articles and questions, that I was skeptical of the laissez-faire conservatism that he espoused.

This spirit of amiable disagreement informed our conversations, but the talk was hardly like an academic seminar. I asked questions and he answered them, a reporter interviewing a government official. What happened last week? What is going to happen next week? As the political events of 1981 grew more complicated and diffuse, we had less and less time for philosophical asides. The congressional budget process is a fiendishly difficult story in any season, and interviewing David Stockman on fiscal policy at 7:30 a.m. is a daunting experience. The conservative columnist George Will, who also breakfasted with the budget director, described the feeling: "When I said something dumb about the decline of productivity, he rolled his eyes heavenward and indicated that productivity is a complex subject that I should leave to the adults. He says such things agreeably, like a Gatling gun that has studied with Dale Carnegie."

This arrangement, of course, gave me several critical advantages that are not usually available to working reporters in search of daily news. I did not have to rush into print with what Stockman told me. I could wait to see whether events confirmed or refuted his opinions. I could examine the continuity of his narrative at leisure, reminding him in July of what he had predicted in February. The political calculations made in the spring were not past, splintered events that occurred and disappeared; the mistakes made in April flowed naturally into the gloom felt in September. At the outset, naturally, neither of us could have predicted the paradox the finished writing would describe: a season of stunning legislative victories by the president that trapped him in an awesome fiscal crisis.

'Publishing the raw version of reality automatically depreciates the value of every insider's knowledge. By going public, Stockman violated the privacy and prerogatives of the network between reporters and public officials. So did I.'

Actually, neither of us was really thinking about the form the writing would take. I had established a valuable peephole on the inner policy debates of the new administration. And the young budget director had established a valuable connection with an important newspaper. I would get a jump on the unfolding strategies and decisions. He would be able to prod and influence the focus of our coverage, to communicate his views and positions under the cover of our "off the record" arrangement, to make known harsh assessments that a public official would not dare to voice in the

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more formal setting of a press conference, speech, or "on the record" interview. Neither of us ever discussed this aspect of our communication directly. But, after the first few sessions, it was established as the implicit, sometimes even dominant, business at the breakfast table. He was using me and I was using him.

Outsiders will ask: If these talks were truly "off the record," how could the contents be useful to *The Washington Post?* Under the informal rules the Washington press obeys, "off the record" means, first, that the public official cannot be quoted either directly or indirectly on what he has said. The information may not be used; it cannot even be attributed anonymously to an unnamed "administration official." The "off the record" interview is still valuable to a reporter, however, partly because it usually provides an unvarnished and relaxed glimpse of what a public official really thinks. The secretary of state may be optimistic in his public declarations, but privately he is gloomy. In official utterances, the White House spokesman may deny a problem the ubiquitous "senior officials" are privately acknowledging. The "off the record" conversations provide guidance, context, and, sometimes, the truth about matters.

A skillful reporter can actually get much of this information into the newspaper or broadcast. First, the reporter can seek out the same information elsewhere; if the substance is confirmed independently from other sources, the reporter is free to write it, without violating the ethical strictures of "off the record." Sources understand this as well as reporters do; government officials who genuinely wish to keep a secret will begin by not discussing it with any reporter, regardless of the ground rules.

Second, the skillful reporter will negotiate with his or her "off the record" source. If the interviewer hears something compelling and newsworthy, he may ask the source if that particular information can be put "on background." Under the Washington rules, "on background" means that the information can be used if attributed to an unnamed source vaguely identified as authoritative. Thus are born the "senior White House official," the "State Department adviser," and the "key congressional aide." Sometimes an especially sensitive source will haggle over the precise anonymous attribution to be given to his remarks, worried that discerning readers will be able to puzzle out his true identity. Thus, an aide to the president may insist that he be labeled "an administration official" but not "a senior White House aide." On other occasions, a source will reflect on what he has said "off the record" and agree that his remarks can be reclassified as "on the record," directly attributed by name.

Almost from the start, Stockman and I bargained like this over the content of our interviews. He would tell me something newsworthy and I would ask if I could put that in the newspaper. He would ponder the potential effects and, more often than not, consent. I would then share the nuggets at the office. Sometimes I would direct a reporter to go in the front door and ask Stockman or other officials questions he had already answered through the back door. Sometimes he would bring up matters on his own, items he wanted to see in print. On a few occasions he absolutely refused to answer my questions because he regarded the information as too sensitive —and too tempting—for me to be trusted with it. From time to time he would complain about some aspects of the *Post*'s coverage, particularly the stories that detailed who was going to suffer from the Reagan budget cuts, but he also praised some stories and individual reporters, particularly the ones whose analysis cut through the public rhetoric to the true core of the policy debates.

Over the months, this obviously was a useful arrangement for me as an editor at the *Post*. The major turning points, from altering the economic assumptions for the original budget forecasts to the climactic battle over defense spending, all were described in advance in newspaper stories, albeit usually attributed to a "senior budget official" or some other suitable cover. Knowledge of the arrangement and its fruits were discreetly shared among the appropriate editors and reporters at the *Post*. Still, I was surprised to learn afterwards that Stockman himself had apparently boasted to *his* colleagues about the arrangement.

After the public controversy, Jude Wanniski, a former *Wall Street Journal* editorial writer and an original apostle of supply-side economics, complained bitterly about the relationship in an interview with the *Village Voice:*

"What has depressed me personally most over the year is the relationship Stockman developed with *The Washington Post*. His position as the Deep Throat . . . with Greider, Bob Kaiser, Caroline Atkinson. The whole *Washington Post* was wired into David Stockman. He would supply them with all the secrets, inner thoughts of the administration, meet with them over and over and over again. It's become the standard practice at the *Post*, to have their Deep Throat and get a Pulitzer

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Prize. That was the intellectual content of it."

"So this arrangement was all in place back in January, February?"

"Oh, yes. Stockman began telling us when he was part of the group, back in 1979, that he was establishing a connection with Greider. He announced this to us as a coup. We said that's great. We wanted journalists who were opposed to us to sit down and listen to us, because the whole thing that keeps us moving is our ability to communicate ideas."

Notwithstanding Wanniski's melodramatic description, others in the press make similar transactions in which information is shared for self-interested purposes. One morning, for instance, I had to wait my turn because Stockman was finishing breakfast with Robert Novak, who writes the Evans and Novak syndicated political column. On another occasion, my appointment was preceded by one with Joseph Kraft. George Will, we already know, was Stockman's friend and confidante. Nor is this remarkable. Stockman may have been more systematic and bold in his pursuit of linkages with the press, but he was doing what virtually every "senior official" of government does routinely. Partly, I suppose, it is required as self-protection. Largely, I think, it is a discreet form of veiled communication that press and policy-makers find useful. It has developed and flourished over many years, a way in which participants in the political debates can argue with each other in semi-public disguises, sending critical messages to colleagues, attacking adversaries, influencing the flow of public dialogue and the content of elite opinion without having to answer directly for their utterances.

After a time one develops an insider's skill at reading these veiled messages. As Wanniski suggested, he could study the news columns of the *Post* and conclude that Stockman was the unnamed source. Or a White House official might read an Evans and Novak column and form a reasonable hunch about which anonymous senator was attacking the president. Or the Pentagon might easily discern in a critical "news analysis" piece in *The New York Times* that the secretary of state or his assistants had provided the ammunition. This coded dialogue may or may not contribute anything of value to the governance of the republic; often it is a closed conversation only the sophisticated few can follow. Other citizens may be baffled by it; more likely they are bored because it is so opaque.

I assume that David Stockman said much the same thing to other journalists, reporters, and columnists that he said to me. As an insider who can read the code, I could study the coverage of *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* and the columnists and see muffled reflections of the same reality that Stockman was describing so vividly in our conversations. Evans and Novak began the year describing Stockman in the most admiring terms; by late summer, when it was clear that Stockman wanted to cut the Pentagon budget, Evans and Novak portrayed him as an enemy. Joseph Kraft, while never citing Stockman as a source, described with remarkable consistency the same story that I eventually told in full. I was struck, in particular, by a Kraft column in early September, two months before the publication of my *Atlantic* piece, that was an uncannily concise outline of the story I was telling. Kraft observed the same gloomy predicament confronting the Reagan administration: "A loss of intellectual bearings describes most clearly what has happened." And: "Events have now buried the theory of expectations in the same grave as the view that wishing will make it so. Far from creating confidence and smashing inflation, passage of the president's program fortified the conviction that government deficits will rise." Kraft noted that "some in the administration recognize what is happening." He cited only one example: David Stockman.

By now, it should be clear why Stockman and I both offended the "rules." The appearance in print of the budget director's candid commentaries shocked sophisticated readers, who nevertheless were not surprised by the substance of what he was saying. Those who had followed the coded dialogue, who had translated the news stories about "senior budget officials," or perhaps heard Stockman say the same things in private meetings, knew well enough where he stood. Still, they found it shocking. The unvarnished private dialogue of government is supposed to remain private—and separate from the bland, reassuring rhetoric of the public discourse. By going public, Stockman violated the privacy and prerogatives of that network, and so did I. Publishing the raw version of reality automatically depreciates the value of every insider's knowledge. It also refutes the images of order and progress conveyed by the daily news. These stories of doubt and misgivings and policy battles had, in fact, been printed in the newspapers, but clearly they were not told in a way

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'The press must reinvent its definition of news. It now places an extraordinary premium on essentially contradictory elements: the immediacy of what happened yesterday and the prophesy of what will happen in the distant future.'

that made much impression outside the inner circle. As a newspaper editor, thinking my submerged conversations were helping to inform general readers, I was most troubled by my belated recognition that the messages were not getting through.

As a reporter, collecting a rare account of the chaotic realities of government, I felt a different obligation. I wanted to retell Stockman's singular story in a way that would allow the broadest understanding of what had occurred. I knew that many of his offhand remarks would sound sensational, but I wanted to be fair to the context of the material (as well as to Stockman). I wanted intelligent readers to grasp that the famous and powerful people who make government policy live in the same bewildering context of change and uncertainty that confronts all human endeavor. As a newspaper editor, I worked according to the realm of news, its rules and daily limitations. Now, as a writer, I had an opportunity to tell the whole story.

STOCKMAN COMES CLEAN

In early August, after the president's tax and budget legislation was enacted, I concluded that the political drama had reached its natural climax and it was now time to write the full account of what Stockman had told me. I proposed this to him and he agreed. There was no discussion of our "ground rules," but throughout our conversations there were many instances that made it clear to me that Stockman fully expected he would be quoted directly in the full account. At several points, when he was making sensitive remarks, he reminded me that his comments were for use later, not now. In one instance, when he was commenting critically on a Republican congressional leader, he pointedly advised me that this material would be permanently "off the record," never to be used. Half seriously, he suggested I turn off the "damned machine." In early September, at our last meeting, I again reminded him that I was preparing to publish the full account of our conversations, and again he assented.

Why did Stockman do it? I will not attempt to read his mind. Perhaps he assumed that his provocative statements were already known to the central players of the Reagan administration and that few would be shocked (we both misjudged this, I think, and reasonable critics might conclude that we were both lost in the warp of inside knowledge). As a reporter, anxious to tell this enormous story, I did not press for reasons. At his White House press conference, Stockman expressed his own puzzlement: ". . . Almost anything other than maybe an indiscreet quotation or expression or metaphor that was contained in that article basically reflects things that I had been saying in our private deliberations as well as in public comments over the last nine months. It was well known, for instance, that I felt some adjustment needed to be made in the defense program—and it was. It was well known I have strongly felt that if we're going to keep the budget on track, we would have to deal with the matter of entitlement and social security. It was well known, during the deliberations of the tax bill, that I felt we should stick to our policy-based rate cuts and depreciation reforms and we should do everything possible—given the legislative circumstances and the realities of the moment—to minimize any excess costs of the bill due to ornaments and secondary matters that would not have an economic effect in the sense of promoting the recovery. . . . So I don't think that there is anything in the article that somehow varies with where my position has been."

This was substantially what he had said to me in private a few weeks earlier, when I was arranging for photographs and reminding him that his published remarks were going to stir up a political

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'The best new journalism will take risks, sharing more fully with the reader or TV viewer what the reporters themselves understand to be happening.'

tempest. As long as the comments were "substantive" as opposed to "ad hominem" personal attacks, Stockman said he was not concerned about the potential impact. "I've been saying those things all over town for months," he said. After the storm broke, he changed his estimate somewhat. The content would cause him considerable political pain, he told me, but the account was "not unfair to me."

Yet the press was as shocked as the partisan politicians. It was as though editors and reporters had no memory of what they themselves had been reporting for months, albeit in the coded dialogue of insiders' stories. Beyond the inner circle, the public was truly shocked by the news bulletins of Stockman's "confessions." Why had no one told them any of these things? Why had this been kept secret? The boldness of his candor was transformed by the news into something neither of us had anticipated, a bizarre news event like "Man Bites Dog." In this case, it was "Public Official Says What He Really Thinks."

ABSENCE OF INSIGHT

After the controversy subsided, I was left to ponder a different and larger question about the press. If people were so stunned by the narrative reality in "The Education of David Stockman," then what did that tell us about the reality of the "news" conveyed to them each day throughout the year? Following the news carefully every day, reading the code with an insider's eye, I too thought the substantive "news" of the article had already largely been reported. Obviously, I was wrong. The sum of the parts was more powerful because it was a comprehensive narrative, not splintered into daily stories. And the tone of private dialogue, presented without modification, overwhelmed the daily impact of the same messages delivered in code. The press, including myself, of course, was usefully serving its smaller audience of the governing elite but not communicating very clearly with the larger public.

Like the political community it covers, the press is a prisoner of its own conventions, trapped by rules and reflexes that seem useful and necessary to the practitioners but ultimately limit their effectiveness. In that netherworld of continuous private conversations, reporters and columnists are informed how government officials really feel, but the press is obliged to muffle or moderate the messages, to cloak the hard edges of doubt and disagreement with the opaque mantle of anonymity. In sum, the press communicates much less coherently than it thinks it does.

After many years in the news business, I came to the conclusion, independently of the Stockman episode, that the reason for this is that there are fundamental flaws in the way the news media package reality and convey it to the general population. Americans consume more information about public affairs now than at any previous point in history, yet they do not seem to have gained a deeper understanding of events, much less control over them, from this deluge. How, after all, can an ordinary citizen with only a limited interest in public affairs really know what's happening? How does the outsider get beyond the politician's rhetoric and see the deeper reality of ongoing events?

He begins, I hope, with healthy skepticism toward all grand claims made in the political arena. He applies his own common sense to all propositions, particularly ones that suggest magical solutions to enduring problems. He does not rely on experts. He asks himself: Does this make sense? He examines his own impulses: Am I voting for an empty sentiment from the past or for a plausible vision of the future? Until Americans get those questions straight in their own heads, they will continue to be deluded by TV performers of one variety or another. Presiding over the United States government is not like starring in a television series. The networks cannot cancel a president when his ratings decline. A viewer cannot switch channels if his hero begins to falter. The president was chosen for four years, not one

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season, and his promises, as well as his performance, should be judged on that basis.

As voters become wiser, however, they are still dependent on the images and information the news media provide them. The press, I think, has to reinvent its definitions of news. An extraordinary premium is now placed on essentially contradictory elements: the immediacy of what happened yesterday and the prophecy of what will happen in the distant future. On many days, these two elements will be merged and the dominant "news" will consist almost entirely of predictions made yesterday about what might happen in the future. I do not expect news organizations to abandon those values entirely, but it ought to be obvious that the emphasis on them leaves readers and viewers with a rather incoherent sense of time and continuity. In the daily news, there is no "past," only today and the far-off tomorrow. The daily newspapers or the evening TV news broadcasts are not likely to conclude that "today" or "yesterday" is less compelling than "last month" or "last year." After all, they are in the business of *daily* news. But it is surely possible to reimagine how stories are to be told and what is to be the most important content.

The values slighted are the ones probably most valuable to the consumer: context and comprehension. While the best reporters and editors do care about them, the reigning conventions of the news business do not. The governing impulse is to simplify and startle. The historic legacy of modern media tells the practitioners that this is what the audience craves. But the modern deluge of information has changed the audience, I believe, in ways that the conventional news organizations simply do not recognize. People seem to "know" everything now—hearing the same news bulletins repeated around the clock—but they seem to understand precious little of what's really going on. That is what they crave—understanding.

The business of news ought to take responsibility for what the consumers of news understand. If that sounds obvious, it is really a radical proposition for news organizations. They see themselves as neutral conveyors, responsible only for delivering the startling facts as they occur. To go further would require the objective journalist to tread beyond the safe limits of what is knowable from daily reporting into the analytical realm where the reporter is obligated to try to make sense of things for the reader. It would force the reporter to question the implicit limitations he has accepted in his transactions with public officials. It would challenge the comfortable arrangements of symbiosis and depreciate the closed system that exists between press and politicians. The system sustains itself on mutual needs: a politician who learns that the press will treat simplistic rhetoric only as news will learn how to fill that need—or else find himself shut out of the news columns. Reporters who complain privately about political demagoguery and distortion usually lack the freedom to call it that in print.

In short, I question the narrow rules of objectivity that govern news judgments and inhibit the news media from truly describing the reality before them. As an editor, I was acutely aware of the criticism aroused when newspapers strayed beyond those limits. Readers who long for comprehension will nevertheless complain about analytical stories that offend their version of the truth. They will denounce the reporting as "slanted" and admonish the newspaper to simply report the facts without embellishment. Mostly, this is what newspapers do, with unsatisfactory results.

The best new journalism will take the risks and try to go deeper—not self-indulgently or for partisan advantage but to share more fully with the reader or TV viewer what the reporters themselves understand to be happening. Often the reporters will be wrong. They will see events through distorted lenses. They will not always be able to dig to the deeper level of reality. Still, I think the audience will understand if reporters try to explain more and startle less. Instead of endlessly asking what's going to happen next, the news media ought to devote more energy to a different question: What *really* happened? The more that question is asked, the more public officials will be compelled to provide honest answers. Newspapers and TV will discover that the past can be as startling as the present and the future.

What was the final lesson for government officials and the press? Despite the shock of truth-telling, Stockman did survive in his job. In most respects, events did confirm his judgments. Is it too romantic to believe that other government officials will take similar risks in the future and let their honest thoughts serve as their defense? I am at least certain that other ambitious reporters will seek similar opportunities, soliciting new kinds of arrangements that will allow more of the private reality to reach the larger audience unmuffled. Only in Washington, after all, is it considered bizarre when someone important comes forward and tells the truth. It might also help if the press acts less horrified the next time it happens. ■

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Artistic Licenses

by Philip Weiss

Sometime in the last 20 years the New York artist came to believe that his tenure on this planet depended on his tenure in Lower Manhattan. If you asked the artist to put his finger on *why,* he would jab at this and that: the exchange of ideas, the special kinetics of an industrial neighborhood, the knick-knacks you could pick up for a few dollars on Canal Street, the importance of a "support group." For "making art"—as they characterized their work it sounded like making love—is very lonely indeed. Some artists had a name for all these things: they said it was the "Critical Mass" of Lower Manhattan.

Critical mass encompassed many things. It took in the museums uptown and the Pearl Paint discount house on Canal and the galleries that had moved to West Broadway in SoHo. It took in the inspiration of other artists at your elbow and the army surplus stores and the architecturally historic commerical buildings of Lower Manhattan Valley, that cluttered sweep of Italianate facades north of the World Trade Center and south of towering midtown. It even took in the waiter's mustache.

Yes, if you really want to know, it took in a lot of things that everyone else in Manhattan wanted too—especially the lofts, lofts full of light, with heavy sculptures and over-sized canvases. The same lofts one saw on the front page of the *Times* Home section, with glass brick walls and butcher block tables and a stockbroker leaning back on tubular chrome furniture.

And that was the problem. The stockbrokers and the dentists, the guys with money wanted in on the action, too. Worse, they were paying top dollar for the coveted spaces. And Lower Manhattan was becoming the artists' Vicksburg. The siege had been laid and the artists were dug in and getting picked off right and left. They couldn't hold out much longer, and when they looked over their shoulders they saw that big river, and beyond that... well, not quite Louisiana... they saw Brooklyn.

Brooklyn. Even if you were not an artist you knew that Brooklyn had no critical mass. You might as well have been on another planet—or, worse, in Santa Fe. To be in Brooklyn was to be alienated, exiled, to feel yourself just *that* close to the big action, the celebrated "eyes" of Manhattan dealers. But no, it was an hour on the D train if you were lucky and then, hey, what gallery owners or

Philip Weiss is a New York writer.

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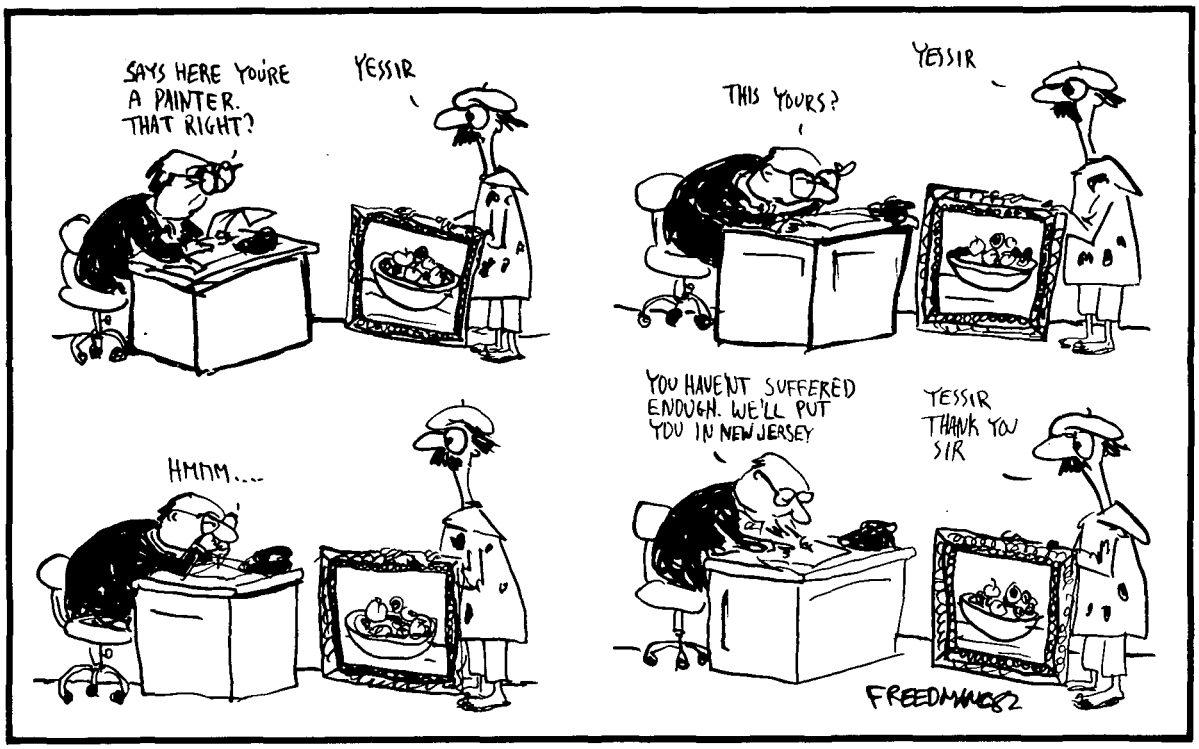

Matt Freedman

patrons were willing to cross the river? There was something so geographically *intimidating* about a river.

So the artists grew very bitter, and they grew pale and thin, sitting there in Vicksburg, watching the lawyers and doctors horn in on their critical mass. After all, SoHo and NoHo had been your classic urban blight before the artists came along. No streetlights. Pitted cobbled alleys. Abandoned commercial lofts thick with half a century of industrial grease, ink, and rags.

Artists had dragged in the bathtubs and the copper pipes under the noses of their see-nothing landlords. Artists had been there for almost 30 years, they had fought off the Lower Manhattan expressway, they had made that spectral landscape habitable—they had given it critical mass.

Sure the lofts were illegal dwelling places—and the artists had contended for years with hostile building inspectors—but now the artists wanted legalization. And now the landlords were selling out the artists—selling out that critical mass.

The artists, bless them, were not going down without a fight. It was 1970 then, and there was glamor in being an artist underdog taking on the system. The press was enchanted. *Life* magazine made SoHo seem like underground luxury: bare shoulders, bare walls. In City Hall, there were planners who believed that artists were the sort of vital force that might ring in the new order.

And if anyone with a more claylike notion of what a city should be wanted to question that, the artists (who were, after all, largely the sons and daughters of the middle class and had a pretty good idea of how America worked) came armed with *statistics*: they contributed more than a billion dollars to the city's economy, directly and indirectly. Just like Wall Street and the garment district, the artists were an industry, and the heart of that industry, the critical mass of it, was in SoHo.

In 1971, the city bought in. Forty-three blocks of SoHo were set aside for artists and other light manufacturers—artists made things too, right?—in an out-of-the-late-sixties vision of heavy workboots and bohemian sandals treading the same polished cobblestones.

So the artists had obtained official status in city affairs. They would get *certificates* from the Department of Cultural Affairs, and only artists with certificates could move in to SoHo (the smaller NoHo district would be added in 1976).

In the context of Guernica and other modernist challenges to 20th-century authority it was difficult to digest, but the artists had their own official 21-member committee that sat around a

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big table in a New York office building and broke pencils and ate sandwiches and drank coffee the city provided. Every year the committee got hundreds of petitioners; every year it decided hundreds of times, yes or no, was this fellow an artist?

Bang went the fists on the table, scribble-scribble went the coordinator, swish went the papers into the files. That holy grail of professionalized, status-anxious America was at last the artists': they, too, had credentials.

Lofty Motives

Mario Pikus, a 38-year-old Argentinian painter, embodies the belief of many artists that they have a higher moral right to cheap Manhattan real estate than everyone else. Pikus's life has been so dominated by his fight to stay in his breath-taking loft on the edge of the TriBeCa section that even his art now revolves around the legal battles. Five judges—of the dozens Pikus says he has appeared before in the last five years—are shown on an enormous canvas on their heads, their robes falling down. A painting of the eviction depicts soldiers with hooded heads, swords and shields threatening a naked sprawling family.

What is Pikus's basic gripe? His landlord wants $2,000 a month for his 3,700-square-foot space (reasonable by New York standards for such a huge area), about the same as other tenants in the building pay. Pikus believes that as an artist—who converted the space from a putrid textile storage loft—he owes only $500. Pikus got an artist's certificate to help his case, and while he's been disappointed so far in its limited application, he has nonetheless succeeded so far in not being evicted or treated like a dentist.

The seal of approval is actually more useful when the issue is not rent but simple habitation. Artists wishing to live in lofts in areas zoned solely for commercial use may do so (two to a building) only if certified. Artists who applied to the Department of Housing Preservation and Development last year to buy one of 120 artist-only townhouses the city was creating from burnt-out shells on the Lower East Side for $50,000 a shot—a good deal for *any* shelter in Manhattan—also had to be certified.

It is true that the artist-only zoning has been honored mostly in the breach. Only in a few egregious cases has the Buildings Department insisted that people moving into the specially protected zones of SoHo and NoHo actually have certification, as the law requires. Ads for lofts in these neighborhoods still keep up the pretense—saying things like "Certified Artists Only" or "Perfect for an Artist"—but $250,000 price tags make it clear that the city is looking the other way.

The certification committee has met with city officials several times over this. But aside from a few relative trifles, such as the $50,000 townhouses, the city prefers to overlook its own law. So it is not surprising that most New York artists don't bother with the procedure. What *is* distressing is that about 4,000 of them do, and that the members of the certification committee take their work so seriously. The committee consists of 21 members, all artists or people involved in the arts. It meets ten times a year, behind closed doors, and seven members must be present to vote on an application. And just like in real court, when an applicant has been denied, he can take his case to an appeals board.

The fact that certification for New York City artists has hung on for 11 years despite fairly empty powers demonstrates just how pervasive the search for credentials really is.

These meetings can grow very heated, and in controversial cases Robert J. Vanni, the corporation counsel to the city's department of cultural affairs, sits in to remind the members of the complex "legislative history" its deliberations have generated. The peculiar American habit of turning every personal or professional matter into a federal case is on display at every meeting.

One concert pianist told the committee he was an artist and had to live in a loft. The pianist was, patently, a fine artist, but the reason he needed a loft was that he had two pianos. The first, for practicing his art, he could have kept in a regular apartment. The second was for teaching, and according to the standards of the committee, *teaching is not art*. But, the pianist insisted, he needed that big space in order to simulate the acoustics of a concert hall. Harrumph, said the music expert on the panel, you can never simulate the acoustics of the concert hall in a loft.

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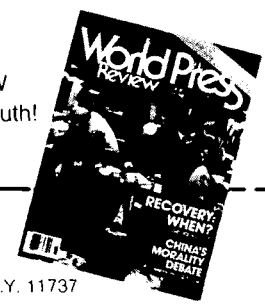

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Then there was the writer of screenplays who needed space to be away from her boyfriend's drums. And the woman who did artistic calligraphies but insisted they were *enormous* calligraphies. And the writer on the arts who won a certificate because he had 35,000 books "essential" to his work, who finally convinced the committee that you can't put 35,000 books on the coffee table.

"It's not like a driver's test. You don't turn right when you're supposed to turn right," Vanni explains the certification committee's process. "It's a collective consciousness, if you will—but those are bad words. An m.o. that we try to enforce. It reflects the continuity of dealing with cases over five years."

The New York Aesthetic Club

Whether sitting in judgment of an artist's "modus operandi" fills some subconscious, long-lost ambition to play commissar (from the Red Greenwich Village of the 1930s, perhaps?) or simply means even *artists* are bureaucrats at heart nowadays, the certification committee attracts well-known figures on the New York art scene. The grand vizier of the process, who steps in when everyone else has thrown up his hands and fallen to the canvas over a disputed artist/pretender, is Henry Geldzahler, a large, florid man who radiates a wire-rimmed Zennish presence, to judge from the portraits by his friends Andy Warhol and David Hockney. You can't help thinking that Geldzahler and company ought to know better, or at least they ought to have more important things to work on.

One reason the committee is so religious in its exertions is that there is, nearly everyone concedes, quite a demand for fraudulent certifications. The committee began to understand this when it got applications with impeccable slides from the address of a law firm or real estate office, when it heard that real estate agents were assuring rich clients that certification was a small hurdle in getting a loft, when artists reported being asked to rent their art works to stock brokers.

Frauds can be fairly innocent—like the woman who explained she was an artist of antique Bentleys and needed a loft with a big garage to polish her craft—or blackmarket, like the applicant who submitted beautiful slides but failed to notice that he had rented from compliant artists works in such varying modes that the committee would smell a rat immediately.

"We've gotten much tougher," says Laurin Raiken, director of the arts and society program at New York University. "I was a real pussycat. I had to wait for my friend. . . to take out a knife and scrape off white-out from slides to see the counterfeiting. I never would have thought people would have done that."

The true objection to the certification process has less to do with fraud or pointy-headedness than it does with the effort to bureaucratize a field one would have hoped was impregnable. The committee is sensitive on this point—it says that it is only trying to find serious artists who wish to protect their neighborhood and their calling and that it's not trying to make aesthetic judgments.

But all those who have been on the committee with whom I spoke made it clear that aesthetic judgments *do* enter discussions. They talk, for instance, of the dilettante whose paintings are dismissed as dabblings, or of the 20-year-old art school graduate who does not show a long commitment to the work but whose slides make committee members groan with pleasure. Which just points up the absurdity of the original contention—the thought that you can actually distinguish a "serious" artist *without* forming an aesthetic judgment.

'Well, this fellow is applying from a mental institution, says he just cut his ear off.' (Groans from the certification committee.)

Bruce Kushnick, a composer and a committee member, explains it this way: Many artists' work caused violent disagreements over aesthetics; some of the certifiers liked it, some didn't. With no agreement on the beauties of someone's art, he says, the committee had to fall back on inarguable paper differences—education, number of shows, and so forth.

It is too tempting not to imagine how the committee would have considered a great—and needful—artist who defied such categorization. Let us take the primitivist Henri Rousseau, who in 1885 quit his job as a municipal customs

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inspector in Paris to satisfy the artistic longings he had until then expressed only as a Sunday painter. His work was most unusual—beautifully designed and colored dream scenes, often in exotic locales. Rousseau thought of himself as belonging to a different century; indeed, decades later expressionists and surrealists would learn from him.

Committee Member 1 (riffling papers): This guy here says he paints his *thoughts*. Ideas that "reach up to the beautiful and the good."

CM 2: Huh, sounds religious. Is he a Moonie?

CM 3: No, just out to lunch. Get a load of these slides. Too much acid?

CM 4: This resume explains everything. He's got no formal training, he's recently widowed, and he's 41 years old. I ask you, why does every Sunday painter with a mid-life crisis have to have his own loft?

CM 5: Yeah, I've seen this guy. He had a couple of paintings in one show, and they were so bad somebody slashed them.

CM 6: Sure, isn't this the guy with the black beard who sleeps around? Handsome guy? Sometimes he plays the violin for money in the park.

CM 7: Alright, alright. *Enough*! Who's next?

CM 1: Well, this fellow is applying from a mental institution. Says he just cut his ear off. (Groans from the committee.)

This episode is deceptive because it is hard to imagine that someone of Rousseau's devotion would have wasted time even applying to the Department of Cultural Affairs. The DCA knows many artists abhor the presumption embodied in certification and refuse to participate, or just hate to deal with structured institutions. So DCA staffers speak of their constituency as both certified artists and "certifiable" ones.

You can see why, too. The application required by the DCA might be familiar to those who have been sifted through bureaucracies ("Include a professional resume pertinent to your fine arts work. Include educational background, professional training, public exhibitions and/or performances, critical reviews, grants, awards or fellowships. Be sure to include dates and announcements. . . . This documentation should reflect a body of work over a period of five years up to and including recent work.") But it is painfully irrelevant to the business it is supposed to protect: people struggling to give expression to ideas and impressions, often of a highly independent character.

This is, of course, a familiar problem of the meritocracy: the emphasis on paper qualifications and scoring that have no real bearing on someone's work. Call it "the bottling problem." An artist couldn't say just what makes him an artist, couldn't put it in a bottle—but the DCA insists on it and has come up with a list of ingredients. Inevitably, because what really matters *can't* be bottled, the list of ingredients—where the artist went to school, where he's shown—are unrelated to art. Worse, as the committee gains control over something artists need—housing—its applicants will cater to it more; the committee's requirements

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Introduction by Charles Peters
Editor of *The Washington Monthly*

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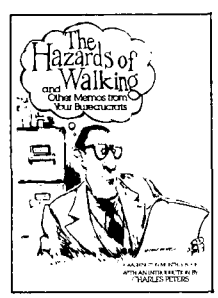

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will influence the substance of artists' work. In the end, the aspiring come to believe that to succeed as artists they must have bottled qualifications.

Many comments I heard suggest that the committee is edging towards this kind of calcified, even bourgeois sense of who the artist is. There is, for instance, impatience with enthusiasm.

"We are not trying to ensconce a lot of bright-eyed and bushy-tailed artists," says Vanni. And former committee member Dianne Talan, a painter, says that the sometimes tedious three-hour meetings would break up into laughter at the presumption of someone who had never exhibited in a show but had included a hand-printed flyer from an exhibition in his bedroom. "There was scorn for what people planned to do," she says.

Did Renoir Hit 60 Homers?

So one senses that, at bottom, the fear of Brooklyn is not the main reason for the whole certification process. Many of the best young artists are *already* in Brooklyn or New Jersey, creating their own critical mass. A clue to why the Department of Cultural Affairs keeps up its effort anyway can be found in the way it refers to artists—as "professionals," implying the requirements of advanced training.

The inescapable analogy, of course, is to other self-designated professions. Doctors and lawyers also responded—100 years ago—to a feeling that their fields were too open and that quality service would be compromised unless they set up some standards. Doctors and lawyers believed you had to get rid of the charlatans to get quality and more money; artists say that New York's future as the arts capital is threatened unless you get the charlatans out of the protected neighborhoods, hence what one artist terms the "necessary evil" of certification.

As I've pointed out already, certification has little real significance in the world of Manhattan art today. But it has a toehold; it could one day control housing for artists, or even—who knows?—the ability to exhibit in important galleries. So it's a little frightening to contemplate the small but real ways in which certification is defining art in the language of bureaucratic America—yes, bottling art.

You'd think artists would never fall for such calibrations. It would be like going through the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection and telling people what to look at by hanging a 95 next to Manet's *Woman with a Parrot* and a 67 next to Cezanne's *The Card Players*. But the pull of quantification is strong even here. Troy Brauntuch, an artist who has made it to the point that he can afford a co-op, speaks of the terrific insecurity of "making art," the inability to know whether the drawing he does today will mean anything in 100 years. In a way, he says, he wishes there were standards that would tell you whether you were a real artist or not. Think of the baseball player, he says, with what sounds like envy in his voice—if he hits a certain number of home runs in a season he can, indubitably, become the best hitter in baseball.

***Certification is a bit like going through the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection and telling people what to look at by hanging a '95' next to Manet's* Woman with a Parrot *and a '67' next to Cezanne's* The Card Players.**

Baseball is better than most professions. At least you get judged on what you actually *do*, rather than how many years you've gone to school and how you've scored on tests. But it doesn't take much to know that neither of these models has even the vaguest application to art. The fact that certification for artists has been established in New York and has hung on for 11 years despite fairly empty powers demonstrates just how pervasive this search for credentials really is.

Art was supposed to be better than all this. It had as much to do with the credentialed way of getting ahead in America as, to paraphrase that old radical feminist line, a fish has to do with a bicycle. Art involved intangibles, didn't it? And the creative act, in the old days anyway, was something independent, individual and beyond official standards. Yes, it numbs the mind to think that people would be willing to sell it all out for a piece of paper—a piece of paper, by the way, that will be issued this year on more official-looking stock, requiring a notary seal. ■

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MEMO OF THE MONTH

State of California | Health and Welfare Agency

Memorandum

To : DEPUTY DIRECTORS

cc: Elaine Barboza MS 17-11

Date : April 28, 1982

Subject: Questionable Social Activities During Working Hours

From : Department of Social Services

It has come to my attention that, in the past several weeks, some organizational units within DSS have had office parties for employees that included performances by professional male and female "strippers", during state time and in state buildings.

Although I recognize that there are a number of party service companies currently offering this and similar types of party services, I would suggest that you remind your Division managers that such activities are inappropriate during state time and contrary to our current sexual harassment policy.

While the overall intent of such activities may be primarily focused on providing an opportunity for fun, the impact that such performances may have on employees may be quite different. For instance, my office has already been contacted by a number of departmental employees who have found these exhibitions distasteful and offensive.

Furthermore, in addition to being contrary to our current policy on sexual harassment, such activities will invariably be viewed by the tax payer as being inappropriate to the work setting for state employees, particularly if the news media were to become aware of the fact that we were permitting such activities in state buildings during working hours.

With these concerns in mind, I would encourage all of you to take immediate action to ensure that these types of activities are not permitted.

ANDY AH PO, Chief
Equal Employment Opportunity Office

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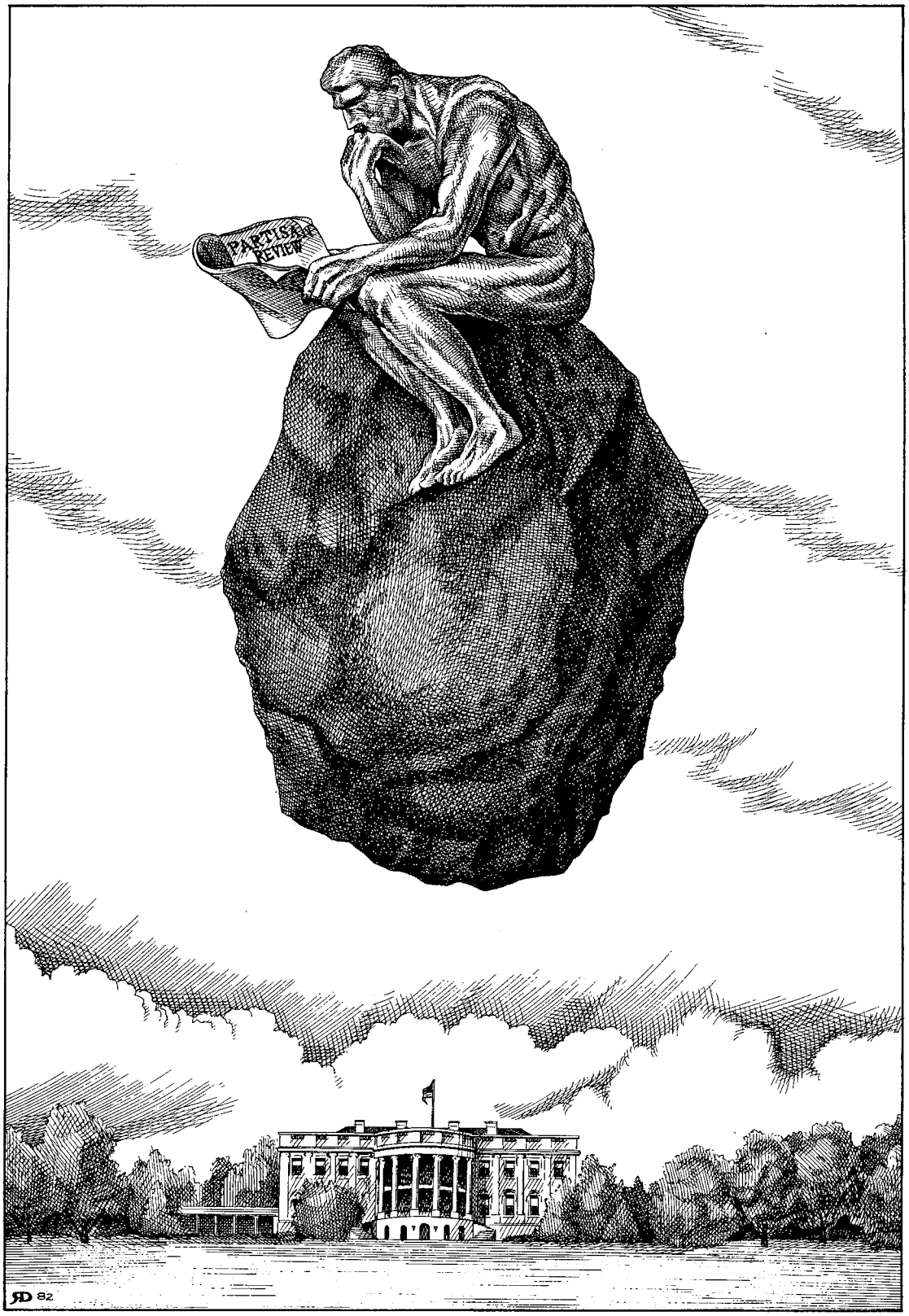

Ray Driver

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Putting the Mind Over What Matters

by Nicholas Lemann

In Saul Bellow's *Humboldt's Gift* there is a scene where the crazy poet-hero, Von Humboldt Fleisher, now widely known as Delmore Schwartz *a clef,* tells his protege Charlie Citrine about his hopes and dreams for the presidency of Adlai Stevenson. "If you could believe Humboldt (and I couldn't)," says Charlie, "Stevenson was Aristotle's great-souled man. In his administration cabinet members would quote Yeats and Joyce. The new Joint Chiefs would know Thucydides. Humboldt would be consulted about each State of the Union message. He was going to be the Goethe of the new government and build Weimar in Washington. 'You be thinking about what you might like to do, Charlie. Something in the Library of Congress, for a start.' "

That would have been 1952, and of course Humboldt didn't get his wish. But the scene is a nice illumination of the not-quite-admitted attitudes that American intellectuals have brought to politics in the generation since the end of World War II, the end result of which is that the culture of intellectual life stands apart from the culture of democratic life. Humboldt's sincere desire to apply his contemplative talents to the world of affairs; his just-as-strong Blue Angel-style scholar's desire for the glamour and fame that are unavailable in his own field; his simultaneous scorn for politics generally and total susceptibility to being conned by the politician he thinks might listen to him—all these, repeated a thousand times, have produced an ongoing tragicomedy of intellectuals and politicians. Intellectuals, when regarding politicians, either turn up their noses (Ike); fall in love with the poetic, above-politics-seeming loser (Adlai Stevenson, Eugene McCarthy); or—with equal futility in terms of their actual effect on policy—come under the spell of a winner who uses them to his own ends. The classic example of the last type of politician is John F. Kennedy.

Kennedy was at first scorned by intellectuals except those who worked for him (most notably, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and John Kenneth Galbraith), but with time he gave many others reasons to join the team. He was at least mildly literary—a Pulitzer Prize-winning author. Robert Frost read at his inauguration. Pablo Casals played at the White House. Kennedy charmed Norman Mailer utterly by telling him he'd read his relatively obscure (though, it should be added, dirty) third novel, *The Deer Park,* and he similarly impressed dozens of other writers by showing a familiarity with their works. After the assassination, *The New York Review of Books* published a special Kennedy memorial issue in which Richard Rovere described Kennedy pulling him aside once to register a few minor complaints with a story in *The New Yorker:* "He seemed to feel that *The New Yorker* was losing its grip if it couldn't be au courant in such matters. . . . He went on with something like, 'What did you make of that last Norman Mailer piece?' " In other words, just like Humboldt and Adlai Stevenson, the way to win intellectuals' political loyalty was through showing a sensitivity to literature.

With the benefit of hindsight, it seems clear that for all the influence intellectuals thought they were having on Kennedy, what was really happening was that they were being brought into a position of support for his agenda. Schlesinger worked in the East, or First Lady's, Wing of a White House so obsessed with fear of sissyhood that the implications of that location could not have been lost on anyone. As Garry Wills puts it in *The Kennedy Imprisonment,* "Kennedy did not liberate the intellectuals who praised him; he subverted them. He played to all that was weakest and worst in them. . . . they wanted a President who would

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listen to them, and they were willing to say whatever 'played' with him." And, though much has happened since then, the same syndrome among intellectuals remains. In the spring of 1980 Jeane Kirkpatrick told a reporter of her and the rest of the *Commentary* crowd's growing regard for Ronald Reagan. "We are bombarded with friendly messages from Republicans," she said, adding that "after a certain time it begins to seem irresistible, especially if the person seems very likely to be the next President of the United States."

It has been in recent decades almost always to the advantage of politicians to undertake the easy task of winning over the intellectuals, the reason being that in the Great Chain of Opinion that ends with network television and life or death for presidents, the first link is the highbrow periodicals and faculty clubs. While intellectuals are not very good at creating the popular support that sweeps a Reagan or a Jimmy Carter into office, they are quite effective at beginning the turn of the tide against them. On the other hand, the politician-intellectual embrace has usually done much less for the intellectual. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, in his more Republican days, used to claim that the height of actual intellectual influence on American politics came in the first Nixon administration, and he might be right. The way it usually has ended is that the intellectual has left behind not his bold and original ideas about government, but part of his reputation for integrity. In retrospect, the intellectual-in-politics we usually admire is the one who stayed flintily apart from it, immune to all blandishments, and sent his ideas hurtling down like lightning bolts to the world below.

Does this seem a sad truth? Does it seem that the place of intellectuals in the political world, especially the liberal political world, isn't what it ought to be? Then it's worth looking at how that came to be, and there's no better place to start than with a tiny publication that is the seed from which virtually all American intellectual life today sprang, *Partisan Review*.

There is a shelf's worth of thinly veiled novels and other accounts of *Partisan Review* and its attendant crowd, but the most direct book on the subject, *The Truants* by William Barrett (with the *Review* from 1945 to 1952), was published this spring. It is not so much a straightforward history of the magazine as a long, moody portrait of its guiding light, Philip Rahv, a man whom, judging from Barrett, you wouldn't want to go bowling with but whom it's impossible not to admire. An immigrant from Russia, born Ivan Goldberg, educated informally in the New York public library, Rahv was passionate, suspicious, vituperative, conspiratorial. He spent decades feuding elaborately with his co-editor and best friend, William Phillips, who in return bestowed a series of memorable *bons mots* on Rahv ("Philip is a manic-impressive," for instance). He gathered around him an extraordinary group of people: Mary McCarthy, Dwight MacDonald, F. W. Dupee, Delmore Schwartz, Elizabeth Hardwick, Harold Rosenberg, Clement Greenberg, Lionel Trilling, Saul Bellow, Hannah Arendt—the list goes on. He was a lifelong Marxist who started *Partisan Review* in 1934 as an organ of the Communist Party USA, and at the same time an ardent supporter of modern art and modern literature.

In 1937 Rahv was expelled from the party over two points, one specific, one general. The first was Stalin and the series of purges that culminated in the Moscow Trials, which led Rahv to the conclusion, dishearteningly rare among American intellectuals of the time, that Stalin was an evil man whose actions were inexcusable. The more general point was the party's position that art and literature, to be of merit, had to portray the class nature of society and the inevitable heroic victory of the working man that history was bringing to pass. Rahv realized this left no room for an appreciation of virtually all great world literature, and as a sincere man of letters he decided that the extent to which art is art is more important than the extent to which it is politically correct. Albert O. Hirschman, in *Shifting Involvements*, says that "[i]ndividuals having had disappointing experiences with one set of activities turn to another set; they *exit* from one to another." Rahv exited from the party to literature.

The break from the party and concomitant adherence to an independent Marxism and intellectual integrity in literary and artistic matters was the central event in Rahv's life. Now, it makes him look great; then, it was a decision *away* from the organized politics of the Popular Front-era Left, and thus a consignment to the lonely life of a Jeremiah. The result was that if Rahv ever had an impulse to get out among the American people, it was now put in cold storage; he was an ivory-tower man. So completely did Greenwich Village represent the entirety of actual experience to him that, says Barrett, "Midtown was for us the name of an

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alien territory, the haunt of the middlebrows and philistines of the cultural world." If that's what Rahv thought of midtown Manhattan, one shudders to think what he must have thought of, say, Manhattan, Kansas.

Rahv supported American entry into World War II—again, it makes sense now, but in that milieu at that time it wasn't obvious. Dwight MacDonald stormed off and started his own magazine, *Politics,* because he thought *Partisan Review* was wrong to approve of helping out capitalist powers like England and France. Rahv opposed Joe McCarthy in the fifties much sooner than other anti-Stalinists. As time went on, all his important ideas proved right and became part of all thinking-people's received wisdom; Rahv himself, however, lost his place at the center of the intellectual world. Barrett's theory is that with the death of his great nemesis, Stalin, Rahv was essentially finished because of both a diminution of passion and an inability to see that the Soviet Union wasn't going to get any more benign with Stalin gone. Like many members of the Old Left, Rahv had little use for the New Left. By the mid-sixties Rahv was no longer the dominant figure at *Partisan Review,* and in 1970 he left to start a magazine called *Modern Occasions,* which lasted only six issues. He died in 1973, 65 years old, a good 20 years past the peak of his influence.

But perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the early fifties was the peak of his *direct* influence; to a large extent, he lives on today. Even in the late fifties, his ideas reached a wider field than *Partisan Review*'s tiny circulation through *The New Yorker,* which used several members of the *Partisan Review* crowd—Mary McCarthy, Harold Rosenberg, Dwight MacDonald, Rahv's friend and enemy Edmund Wilson—as the writers who would express its own most serious side. What were themes in the *Partisan Review* became trends in the wider world: support of abstract expressionism, admiration for Henry James, liberal skepticism of Henry Wallace and the world of late-forties fellow-traveling.

The New York Review of Books, America's most important and influential intellectual magazine since its founding 20 years ago, is a child of *Partisan Review;* its first issue carried contributions by Rahv, Phillips, McCarthy, Dupee, MacDonald, and several others from the old crowd. The neoconservative world of which *Commentary* is the epicenter, while in disagreement with *The New York Review* about virtually everything, is also descended from *Partisan Review* in the sense that Norman Podhoretz came of age in its golden era, wrote for it, and, like everyone else, feuded with Rahv. *The New Republic* has, under Martin Peretz, established its link with the *Partisan Review* tradition, leaving *The Nation* and *The Progressive* as the only real continuing legatees of the soft-on-Russia side of American liberalism. Even *National Review* has a *Partisan Review* veteran, James Burnham.

The legacy of *Partisan Review* does not end with people, institutions, or even particular political ideas, however. It extends also, less noticeably but just as influentially, into matters of style—into the way in which American intellectuals regard their society, and in particular its politics. The unsatisfactory fit between liberal intellectual and political life today is in part a product of this side of the *Partisan Review* legacy. Specifically, it has roots in three traits of Rahv's, minor and harmless when they first appeared, that now, huge and unexamined, stand in the way. Put simply, they are: literariness, remoteness, and avant-gardism.

Rahv's love of literature was as strong as, and perhaps stronger than, his love of politics. It was a large part of what propelled him out of the Communist party, and he left behind more literary criticism than political analysis, under his own name, at least. Given that the Communists were hostile to great literature because it didn't speak to their idea of "the people," and given that the segment of great literature that most appealed to Rahv (Joyce, Pound, Eliot, Dostoevsky, James) was not the most accessible to begin with, it was inevitable that Rahv would become suspicious that popularity and great literature could coexist. Trilling even harbored doubts that a liberal culture and great literature could coexist. And the further, unstated step to which this line of reasoning could be taken was that whatever general truths pertained to literature also pertained to political ideas. William Barrett calls this a tendency to "cultivate politics as if it were a purely aesthetic discipline."

Thus an appreciation of great literature required breaking away from the public's and the critical establishment's tastes. The inescapable corollary was that having great political ideas required the same process. Weren't Rahv's own ideas about politics—faith in Marx, yet hatred of Stalin—appealing to only a handful of people? With literature as an intellectual starting point (modern literature, anyway; Shakespeare and

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Dickens were certainly popular), it is difficult to accept that a true titan of the political field would be one who not only had great ideas but also could sell them to millions of people. Such a person would, to carry out the analogy, be like a best-selling author, and bestselling authors invariably lacked literary merit. When, in the mood of consensus that developed after the war, the notion of culture for the masses began to reemerge from the mists of the thirties, stripped of the cloak of Marxism that it had come to carry back then, nowhere was it more assiduously opposed than in the pages of *Partisan Review*, where the lessons of the thirties were well remembered; and when, in the same spirit, the idea of intellectuals helping form a *political* consensus came out, too, *Partisan Review* again looked askance.

Remoteness, the second Rahv trait, came to him more gradually, but perhaps it was inevitable, given his life-forming decisions in the mid-thirties. As a young critic, Rahv was well aware of the benefit to writers, particularly in a huge and still changing country like the United States, of what he called "experience." "The dissociation of mind from experience," he wrote in his best-known essay, "Paleface and Redskin," "has resulted in truncated works of art, works that tend to be either naive and ungraded, often flat reproductions of life, or else products of cultivation that remain abstract because they fall short of evidence drawn from the sensuous and material world." Certainly, in politics, the Stalinism of the thirties liberals was an example of just those deleterious effects that await the intellectual who doesn't bother going out to find out what's really happening.

As time went on and Rahv was drawn more and more into a closed circle, he seemed to forget his own lesson. "Paleface and Redskin" was a perfectly balanced assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of writers of experience (Whitman, Twain) and writers of contemplation (James, Melville), but Rahv's own tastes in American literature turned inexorably back toward James and the Paleface school. He was convinced that American society, having moved past the frontier stage, was becoming more complex and so needed a literature and a politics of ideas. "Until very recently there has really been no urgent need in America for high intellectual productivity," he wrote in 1940, implying the time had arrived. Under these conditions, the usefulness of experience in literature—and by extension in politics—was lessened. He said the "real" appears in American fiction "as a vast phenomenology swept by waves of sensation and feeling," leaving "little room for the intellect." Thus it was incumbent upon the intellectual to concentrate on writing about ideas, as the times required, and to cast off the sloppy, non-idea-producing accumulation of firsthand experience. To do so was practically a matter of intellectual integrity. (It should be noted that the intellectual who was writing for 1950s quarterly fees would not be presented with the slightest temptation to behave otherwise.)

Mistrusting mass opinion and firsthand experience, the *Partisan Review* crowd, as intelligent as it was, could hardly avoid beginning to think of itself as a hardy, lonely band, a classic avant-garde, doomed to unpopularity by the very rightness of its view. From there, it is a short leap to the attitude that any idea that really catches on—that is no longer avant-garde—is unappealing because standing by it requires abandoning the lonely-sentry-of-society stance. And from there, it is just another short step to outright snobbery: better to keep abreast of what ideas are one step ahead of public tastes than to risk thinking like (*being* like!) the philistines. The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, says William Barrett, were exactly what Philip Rahv had been advocating for years, "but [they] also left him faintly ill at ease. A political policy which had been avant-garde was now about to be contaminated by being taken up by the *hoi polloi*. . . . For the intellectual the avant-garde position may lose its special enchantment when it becomes commonly accepted: after all, it may be held now in a vulgar way and not for his lofty reasons." By the early fifties in New York, say some who were there, one reason to read *Partisan Review* was to keep one step ahead of the game, to know which names could be dropped at cocktail parties and which couldn't.

So the three strains—the literary, the remote, and the avant-garde—were established, and they quickly became interwoven and persisted through the years. The result was a feeling that the best minds would exist at a distance from the society—removed from the court of public opinion, removed from firsthand experience, and prone to taking artistically pure political positions while scorning the grubby practicality of politics and government.

This led, first, to a splintering of the intellectual family into loose camps based on how closely the *Partisan Review*'s stance was adhered to. Social

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scientists, who might have been valued for their familiarity with empirical evidence, instead were regarded as the second class of intellectuals, too practical and boring. "When I was an undergraduate at Columbia," Jason Epstein once wrote, in a tone of some self-mocking but not so much as to make you miss the point, "it was unfashionable to study sociology. Those who did were, one felt, the future businessmen of the crash of 1949 or the dentists, the careerists, the politicians."Alternatively, the few intellectuals who, under the banner of William Blake and Walt Whitman, became first beatniks and then hippies (like Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac), had sterling avant-garde credentials—the press with which many of them published their books was suitably titled New Directions—but became too non-literary and non-remote.

Another type, the intellectual-in-government, was also viewed with a weather eye by the old crowd back in New York, his every hint of ridiculousness and self-lowering instantly noted. Elizabeth Hardwick, wielding the rapier deftly, described such a person in this way: "Our writer, our economist, our thinker, this person who would bring to Washington and national affairs some of the order that goes into the making of books or even into the reading of them did at last enter the city with Kennedy, a few of them entered at least. What he was to do there we do not quite know, since government is not a book." With that kind of support from the home office, no wonder intellectuals in Washington so often tended to be more influenced by the government than the government was by them.

In much the same way that the intellectuals' perception of people had its biases, their perception of issues did, too. William Barrett suggests that the intellectual passion for anti-communism (as opposed to the more practical Bundy-McNamara-Kennedy passion for anti-communism) was gone as soon as anti-communism reemerged from its wartime slumber as a great cause of the Babbitt and sub-Babbitt classes. Generally, a certain amount of snob appeal helped sell a cause to the intellectuals. While the *Partisan Review* crowd and its legatees were never ardently pro-Vietnam war, they didn't say much about it under Kennedy. Granted, it barely deserved to be called a war then, but Kennedy's unmistakable hawkishness was surely counterbalanced by his personal attractiveness to intellectuals. When Vietnam became the way of Lyndon Johnson—vulgar, badly educated, and hick—the tide turned.

The intellectuals woke up about the war before almost anyone else, and to their credit they helped change the rest of the country's mind about it. But it's significant that the great epiphany about the war for the intellectual community came in the summer of 1965, when Johnson held an arts festival at the White House and Robert Lowell, an impeccably credentialed intellectual, refused to attend on grounds of the Vietnam policy. The subtext of the event was how dare *Johnson,* of all people, try to make political hay by having an arts festival when he was known to lack an appreciation of the arts. So Lowell's protest put the anti-war movement in the context of seriousness about culture, and as such it caught on in a big way. By the time of the great troop escalation in the fall of 1965, the *New York Review* had already printed "A Special Supplement: Getting Out of Vietnam."

The other side of the coin was that the intellectuals, while tireless in their writing, petition-signing, and speaking in furtherance of the cause, in the end did not win over more than a large minority of the people—witness the 1972 election results. The reasons are many, but one is that the culture of the antiwar movement (and also the anti-poverty movement), while it greatly valued being right early and being right elegantly, did not greatly value the ceaseless, clumsy, endlessly repeated acts of political persuasion. Thus the political ante was constantly being raised—did you support the NLF? the Panthers?—and, at least in intellectual circles, the restrained, lovely, Anglophilic mode of discourse was never seriously breached. In other words, intellectuals played a political version of the old literary game of staying one step ahead of popular tastes, in a way that, at its worst, found expression in an anti-working-class prejudice (remember how policemen were routinely called "pigs"?) that was both morally unattractive and politically unproductive.

The best example that it doesn't have to be that way comes from the period just before the Revolutionary War to just after the ratification of the Constitution, when men of high intelligence and writing ability (and even less faith in the wisdom of the masses than had Philip Rahv et al.) successfully sold a majority of their countrymen on a wild new form of government—democracy. Bernard Bailyn, in his classic study of the pre-Revolutionary War political pamphlets that he says were American democracy's real crucible, makes the point that British pamphlets of the same period

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were far superior as literature. Many of them are still read today, as literature, whereas the American pamphlets are now forgotten, except possibly for Thomas Paine's *Common Sense,* which is read more as a historical document than fine writing. But there was a reason, Bailyn says, why the American pamphlets had such a vast effect on the history of the world: "They sought to convince their opponents, not . . . annihilate them. . . . The communication of understanding . . . lay at the heart of the revolutionary movement, and its great expressions, embodied in the best of the pamphlets, are consequently expository and explanatory: didactic, systematic, and direct, rather than imaginative and metaphoric. They take the form most naturally of treatises and sermons, not poems; of descriptions, not allegories; of explanations, not burlesques. The reader is led through arguments, not images. The pamphlets aim to persuade." Later, when images also were called for, the Founders served them up; the point about their writing is that they were able to turn their talents fully to rallying and winning over the public to their ideas. So, later, were the abolitionists. So were the New Dealers. But in the last decade or so this ability has lain dormant, except among intellectuals of the Right.

The great recent example of how liberal intellectuals might act in the political world is that of the supply-side economists. Though it was thanks in part to an incredible series of lucky breaks, these men formulated a series of new and wild ideas and, in less than five years, saw them become government policy. They were, as is now painfully clear, the dreamiest of dreamy intellectuals, and they were certainly avant-garde, if not exactly *the* avant-garde. But there was a lot of other baggage they weren't carrying, not having come out of the dominant postwar intellectual tradition. They didn't believe that a great idea would be corrupted by becoming popular, so they ceaselessly propagandized for theirs in organs high and low. They didn't think examples drawn from experience would pollute their thought, so they combed the world for examples (Singapore, Puerto Rico) that they felt proved their points. They didn't derive any snob appeal from their idea, so when it showed signs of catching on they didn't start looking for the next twist. And the pity is that all this couldn't have happened to a less wonderful bunch of theories. Next time the same fate ought to befall the right ideas. ■

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TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES

SOUP'S ON

A new book called *What Business Can Get From the Government* ($37.50) provides these helpful hints on how to get money from the U.S. Treasury:

—You set up shop as a business consultant. The government sends you clients *and pays their bills.* (page 180)

—A government purchase order that is the next best thing to a "blank check" for repeat sales. (page 80)

—The goverment accepts your low bid. You raise the price. The government pays it. (page 30)

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—Five ways to negotiate a government contract so the government bears the risk if the costs get out of line. (page 179)

—How to get government research business based on the expertise of your personnel—*without having to have the personnel on your staff.* (page 38)

'You May Recall That My Previous Recipe Called for Five Pints of Cooking Sherry'

Julia Child recently revealed that, in her judgment, the best way to peel a tomato is with a blow torch.

'They Say the Day Schools Are Better Out There'

New York magazine reports that Carlos Hank Gonzalez, the mayor of Mexico City, owns an $875,000 home in New Canaan, Connecticut. The mayor's wife and children are said to live there year-round. Gonzalez commutes on weekends.

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Affirmative Reaction Plan Unveiled

So far only about ten thousand of the federal government's two million employees have lost their jobs as a result of Reagan's budget cuts. But a congressional study shows that 62.9 percent of these workers are women and 39.2 percent are minorities. Women and minorities make up only 32 percent and nine percent of the federal work force, respectively. The study shows that only 20.6 percent of those laid off were white males.

And to Screw in a Lightbulb. . .

The *Maui News* reports that in Hawaii it takes seven government workers to inspect a truck. One person flags the truck. A second guides the truck onto a weight scale. Two others measure the length of the truck. One person records the measurements. The last two issue citations.

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HOW TO BE AS FUNNY AS ART BUCHWALD

by Art Levine

How do you become a famous American humorist? To help us answer this question, we're proud to present an exclusive excerpt from the third volume of Art Levine's best-selling autobiographical trilogy, Born Funny, *published in 1995.*

As I sit here on the beach at Martha's Vineyard, I often pause to reflect on my life as America's most adored humorist. Though my days now are filled with delivering lectures or attending autograph parties for my latest book, *The Yuk Stops Here,* making it to the top of the humor heap was no picnic.

When I first started out as a freelance humor writer, it was hard getting published. I lived in a tiny attic room in a boarding house, and, boy, the cockroaches there were so tough *they* hired an exterminator to poison *me*. Even the rats carried guns—that's how tough the neighborhood was. I was so poor, I had to do all my window shopping at Woolworth's.

Art Levine is a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly.

Photo: Kathleen Koenig

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But seriously, having just arrived in Washington from my hometown of Brooklyn, my head was full of big dreams about being a great humorist—just like my boyhood idols, Shecky Greene and Joey Bishop. For awhile, in fact, things looked good. I was able to sell political satires to important, mass-market publications like *The Washington Monthly* and *Foreign Affairs*. Sometimes I even got paid for them.

Yet even at my best, it was never easy coming up with gag ideas. I'd go to my local cafe and sit with other impoverished artists for hours, nursing a beer, waiting for the Muse to strike. It was a long wait: I came up with a funny idea only every three months or so. After awhile, the time between gag ideas stretched to six months and finally a year.

Nothing seemed to work—not even a visit to the little-known Department of Humor in Washington. When they told me they had no extra gags to lend me, I left the office despondent. I started panhandling. "Excuse me sir," I would plead, "can you lend me a dollar so I can buy a used copy of Bennett Cerf's *Treasury of America's Favorite Jokes*?"

Then I realized there was already someone in Washington doing what I wanted to do—Art Buchwald. He'd written 20 books, 5,000 newspaper columns, and he appeared in 550 newspapers throughout the world. Three times a week, he wrote an uproariously funny column that everyone loved. I hadn't read him regularly since Nixon resigned, but then I started looking at what he did with new appreciation. I decided to approach him for advice.

He wasn't easy to reach. He was always coming out of some dinner party or restaurant surrounded by admirers. Finally, I caught his attention when he was leaving Jean Louis, a fancy French restaurant. Buchwald was wearing a loud plaid sports coat, smoking a cigar, and cracking jokes. I was unshaven, dressed in blue jeans, and a bit shaky from hunger.

"Mr. Buchwald, I don't understand it," I wailed, falling to my knees in front of him. "We're both Jewish, we're both funny, and we're both named Art. Yet you're a rich and famous humorist, and I can't even pay my rent. What's your your secret?"

He took a long drag on his cigar. "It's like this, kid. You've got to learn a few basic tricks if you want to survive as a humorist—and from the looks of things, you'd better learn them fast. Here's what I'll do for you—I'll give you a free copy of my latest book, *Laid Back in Washington with Art Buchwald*. It was on *The New York Times* bestseller list for three months. Read that, along with my recent newspaper clips, and you'll find everything you need to know."

"Gee, thanks, Mr. Buchwald," I said. "I'll never forget you for this."

"Well, if you *don't* like the book, remember who wrote it—Russell Baker," he quipped.

But his columns were everything he promised, and more. The first thing I noticed was the brilliant way he conceived a premise—and telegraphed it to his readers in the first two paragraphs. Then he spent the next 600 words or so padding out the idea. But how did he think up his hilarious gag ideas? Looking over his columns I realized he either (a) exaggerated wildly or (b) stood a news event on its head. He also created funny metaphors from common figures of speech and well-worn, overused cliches. What a fool I'd been, waiting for the Muse when all the material I needed was coming to me every morning in the newspaper!!

I saw all of these techniques at work in his rib-tickling article on the economy, "A Light at the End of the Recession." As usual, Buchwald wasted no time setting up the premise:

"All the president's men keep saying the recession will bottom out very soon. It is an act of faith with them that, if the people would just have patience, Ronald Reagan's economic plans will work. I was skeptical until I spoke to one of Reagan's advisers. He was in a deep pit, and I leaned over the edge and yelled down to him, 'What do you see?'

" 'It seems to be bottoming out,' he yelled up.

" 'How do you know?'

" 'I can see the light at the end of the tunnel.'

" 'Where is it coming from?'

" 'The latest indicators,' he shouted."

As I continued to read this column, I wondered whether Buchwald would run out of cliches and obvious metaphors before it ended. I needn't have worried. Buchwald not only paced himself brilliantly, but knew how to leave 'em laughing. It was as if there were a drummer's rim shot being sounded at the end of the column:

"A voice came from the dark: 'I just hit a slight depression.'

" 'Are we in a depression?' I screamed fearfully.

" 'No, I thought I had stepped on a place that was bottoming out and I didn't see the hole. I'm OK now. I'm holding on to a price indicator that shows we are on very solid footing.'

" 'Thank God. No recession is worth the loss of a Republican economist.' "

Inspired by Buchwald, I began thumbing

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through my Sunday paper. It was a maiden effort, but promising; with just one edition of *The Washington Post*, I created a week's worth of column ideas. I made a list, with the real headlines in one column and the column ideas in the other:

"Out of Work in Flint, Mich."	*The recession hits Palm Springs. Families cut back by selling their extra Rolls Royces and firing servants. One resident, Archibald Moneybags, threatens to leap from his eighth floor condominium.*
"Political Consultants: New Kingmakers Work Their Magic"	*King Arthur, worried that Sir Lancelot's popularity is rising, orders Merlin to invent the first political commercial.*
"Sex, Drugs Probed on Capitol Hill"	*Outbreak of congressional virtue stuns Washington. Secretaries and pages report they haven't been propositioned in over two months, threaten to quit.*
"Video Games Disrupt Schooling, Parents Say"	*The New York City school system announces that it's converting all schools into video arcades. "We hope to keep student interest with such games as Math-Man and Historoids," says one official, Millicent Atari.*

It certainly seemed easy enough to think up premises for humor columns. But producing an *entire column* based on a single gag concept was another matter. When *I* tried my hand at it I ran out of steam after the first few paragraphs because I couldn't come up with any more material.

Not so with Buchwald. But how did he do it? Looking closely at "The Light at the End of the Recession," it suddenly dawned on me. Buchwald peppered the economist with such questions as "How do you know?" and "Where is it coming from?" By using this question-and-answer format, Buchwald freed himself from such tasks as creating the transition sentences or imaginative scenes that I naively thought were needed.

Best of all, each piece of dialogue allowed him to start a new paragraph, bringing him ever closer to the magic 600-word mark or its equivalent in column inches. Many of these space-killing bits of dialogue have since become hardy components of my own humor factory. I still chuckle at these classic quotations drawn from his columns:

"How do you know?"

"Explain how that works."

"How do I do that?"

"I don't understand."

His book and recent columns were filled with other equally valuable pointers. One of his favorite devices, I noticed, involved the Expert with the Funny Name. It's a great way to win extra laughs. For many years, of course, our country's greatest humorists—among them, Buddy Hackett—have used funny names to punch up their work. But Buchwald was the true master of this technique. For example, in a column on Al Haig's business prospects after leaving office, he named the literary agent who immediately telephones Haig to offer him a book deal "Fast Fingers Dundy." Buchwald often went one step further, creating an imaginary expert with a funny name and then "interviewing" him about a particular topic. (The interview format, of course, allowed him to use plenty of dialogue filler.) So in one column he interviewed "Vladamir Gluck," the purported inventor of the junk telephone call. Sometimes Buchwald topped even that by attaching the expert to an imaginary agency or business that *also* had a funny name. In a column on the student shortage, an advertising executive, Mr. Honeybee, made a presentation to the board of Desperate Tech University. I'm forever grateful to him for teaching me such handy short-cuts to laughter.

Buchwald also showed me how to use the ancient technique of metaphor to amuse readers. In a piece called "Put on Your Lifejackets," Buchwald compared the country under President Carter to a boat called Ship of State:

"The captain [Jimmy Carter] said, 'Let's drift until I talk to the crew.' The captain grabbed the speaker. 'Now hear this. This is your captain speaking. We are headed into rocky waters and I want all congressional chief petty officers topside immediately.'

"A surly band of CPOs came topside. 'Gentlemen, I need your help. I can't steer this ship alone.'

" 'Where are we heading, Captain?' one of them wanted to know.

" 'I'm not sure, but I'd like to stay on course.'

" 'If you don't know where we're going, how can we help you stay on course?' "

It took me a few careful readings to realize that this unusual metaphor was actually a sharp satiric thrust at *Carter's vacillation and incompetence.*

By now, I'd read enough great writing to realize

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that I wanted Art Buchwald to be my mentor. I hoped to write a few columns for him, learn from his critiques, and, perhaps, see my articles published, even if they ran under his by-line. I sent him pieces I thought he'd use—such as a new federal loan program to subsidize teenagers' phone bills and the Army's effort to recruit more women by giving them charge accounts at Bloomingdale's—but he kept rejecting them as not up to par.

Finally, I hit the jackpot. I took as my premise, as Buchwald always did, something that was widely publicized and an obvious target. In this case, it was President Reagan's image problems with the poor. I used all of Buchwald's techniques to write the column, and, to my delight, he ran it without any changes. Here's what was published:

The Poor's Best Friend

President Reagan is developing a reputation as someone who doesn't care about the poor. So the administration is launching a counteroffensive to spruce up the president's image.

To see how the program is going, I visited my friend I.M. Hypocrite at the Department of Human Suffering (formerly the Department of Health and Human Services). As I entered the room, I saw Ronald Reagan dressed up like Santa Claus, giving out bags of money to poor people. My friend was standing at the side filming the action with a camera.

"What's going on here?" I asked.

"We're filming a public service announcement to help President Reagan's poor public image concerning the poor," Hypocrite answered me.

"But why are you showing President Reagan as Santa Claus giving out money to poor people?" I asked.

"Because we're trying to show everybody what a generous man the president is," he said. "Our motto is going to be: If you give our economic program a chance, every day will be like Christmas!"

"Do you think that will work?" I asked.

"Sure it will," Hypocrite said. "Reagan is such a great actor, he can fool anybody." He turned to the president and shouted, "Cut, Mr. President, that was great! We'll film the next spot in a few minutes."

"What other commercials do you have planned?"

"We're going to have Nancy and Ronald donate all their china and designer clothes to an orphanage."

"But how will all this actually help the poor who are being hurt by the president's economic program?"

"It will make them feel better, because they know their president cares about them."

"But what if they're still hungry and miserable?" I asked.

"Well," said Mr. Hypocrite with a grin, "we'll let them eat cake."

The rest is history. Over the years, I anonymously contributed dozens of columns. Then, when Buchwald retired in 1990, I just took over the column. I'm proud to say that few people noticed the difference. The column is now more popular than ever, syndicated in almost every major newspaper except *The New York Times*, where Flora Lewis now holds down the "humor" beat.

Long gone are those early days when trying to be funny made me miserable. Here's my typical day:

I get up around 10 a.m. in my swank Georgetown home. In bed next to me is my sexy, blond wife, also a published author. At breakfast I glance through the newspaper for possible story ideas and tear out a few articles to stuff in my shirt pocket. After arriving at my downtown office, I pick up one of the articles I ripped from the paper that morning and knock off my column in 15 minutes. That's what I like about my job—it's indoors, and there's no heavy lifting. Then I'm off to the bank to cash my check from last night's lecture. The next stop is a glamorous French restaurant to meet my friends Ben Bradlee Jr. and Edward Bennett Williams III for lunch. We gossip about politics, real estate, and how much we miss the Redskins.

Sometimes at lunch one of the officials I've satirized comes up to say hello. Just the other day, for example, I did a column making fun of the administration's decision to ship nuclear weapons and ten prominent American Jews to Libya in exchange for a year's worth of free oil. I called the column "Let's Make a Deal," and portrayed the new secretary of state as a game-show host. At lunch the next day I was flattered when the secretary himself came over and asked me to autograph his copy. "You're my kind of Hebe," he quipped, and we all had a good laugh. Being a world-famous columnist is so much fun I sometimes can't believe that what I do is really "work."

Of course, people sometimes ask me, "Art, have you ever worried about burning out, waking up one morning unable to come up with anything more than just another funny name?" I'd be lying if I said I haven't. After all, no one, not even a comic genius like Art Buchwald, can reasonably be expected to be hilarious three times a week.

But recently I found a way to stop worrying about The Bomb—the Comedy Bomb that is. Thanks to the marvels of computer science, I can now take any news story, and by feeding it directly into my home computer come up with an uproariously funny column—every time.

I sometimes wonder what my beloved mentor would have thought about all this. But I think he'd be proud. Now the Buchwald humor column truly is an institution that will live forever. ■

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Lead Astray:

HOW THE EPA LET ONE GET AWAY

BY NANCY MADLIN

The Environmental Protection Agency has been getting a lot of bad press lately, and for good reason. With Jim Watt sound-alike Anne Gorsuch at its helm, hardly a week passes without another report of EPA perfidy. Perhaps it's a "voluntary compliance" regulation allowing industries to monitor their own dangerous carcinogens, a relaxation of standards for deadly chemicals, or yet another crippling budget cut in EPA's enforcement staff.

But while I'm as upset with the EPA as the next person, what I find disturbing is the implication in all this that Gorsuch somehow has taken an agency that was once a crusading, vigilant watchdog of the public's health and safety and turned it into a compliant lap dog of industry. This view pervades most press accounts of the EPA, from lengthy *New York Times* exposes to the despondent EPA bureaucrat in "Doonesbury" who perched himself on a window ledge and threatened to jump because of Gorsuch's policies. The truth, however, is even less comforting. As watchdogs go, this one has *always* acted as if it were half blind, lame, and afraid of its own shadow.

I speak from personal experience. During the Carter presidency—an era that now seems enshrined in the collective memory as some sort of EPA "Golden Age"—I was a public information specialist in EPA's Chicago office, where I kept busy writing press releases announcing "notices of violation," enforcement orders, and fines the agency issued to companies breaking air pollution laws. Most of us were proud, if not a bit self-righteous about our work. While other federal employees might be shuffling memos back and forth in some bureaucratic backwater, we could boast of serving a noble cause: the war against environmental degradation.

Yet I always had a vague feeling that despite all the releases I was writing, something was amiss. Were the fines threatened by the agency paid in full, or even paid at all? Were the enforcement orders effective, or were they later watered down, or simply ignored? I could never tell, because, not

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surprisingly, my superiors did not regularly feed me information for releases headlined "EPA's $25,000 Fine Reduced to $350," or "EPA Enforcement Order Ignored for the Seventh Time." As in a previous war, the body counts in this one seemed suspect.

After I quit the agency and moved to New York City, my curiosity got the better of me. On October 10, 1980 I ran across a two-inch story buried in *The New York Times* headlined, "Brooklyn Company Sued Over Pollutant." The article began: "The Federal EPA filed a $15-million damage suit yesterday against the Non-Ferrous Processing Corporation of 551 Stewart Avenue, Brooklyn, which was accused of discharging heavy concentrations of lead oxide into the air." It went on to say that 21 children living near the company's factory showed "elevated lead levels" in their blood.

The case seemed unambiguous—the environmental equivalent of "Dragnet"'s Jack Webb tracking down a heroin dealer plying his trade at a neighborhood grade school. Non-Ferrous had repeatedly violated several pollution statutes, emitting, by the company's own estimate, up to 40 pounds of lead an hour from its small factory. Here, I thought, was an apt occasion for a case study that could resolve my doubts about the agency's effectiveness. My reasoning was straightforward: if the EPA couldn't handle a case this easy, it might as well turn in its badge.

What I discovered was far worse than I'd imagined. The October 1980 lawsuit came only after Non-Ferrous had violated the air pollution statutes for over a decade. During much of that period, the EPA and the state and local government officials involved in the case were totally ignorant of Non-Ferrous's existence.

After the authorities discovered the company and its polluting ways, their efforts to enforce the law were so anemic the company ignored them with impunity. In fact, for Non-Ferrous, EPA's strategy proved profitable: during the company's decade-long pollution spree, total fines collected by the government amounted to about $15,000. No, there aren't any zeros missing from that figure; for every day it illegally spewed toxic lead into the air, the company paid a penalty of less than $4.

Of course this one example shouldn't suggest that EPA is a totally impotent agency. It isn't, and the nation's air and water are demonstrably cleaner than they were in 1971, the year the agency was created. Nor was the EPA the only one responsible for this sorry affair. Other government agencies—local, state, and federal—did their best to ensure Non-Ferrous didn't receive the punishment it deserved.

Nonetheless, the Non-Ferrous case illustrates some important failings in the nation's efforts to protect the environment, failings that Gorsuch's antics have made it easy to overlook. Since its creation the EPA has preferred the role of the "soft cop," trying to persuade polluters that obeying the law is in their own best interests. Cooperation between government and business was the watchword; actually punishing someone for breaking the law, even if he did it repeatedly, was usually considered vengeful and inappropriate. With polluters who were sincere about obeying the laws or genuinely fearful of the consequences of breaking them, this approach might work. But of those companies willing to challenge EPA's bluster, many found they could avoid compliance for years, with little or no consequence. These companies discovered something most EPA-watchers overlook: More important than whether specific emission standards are lax or strict is the agency's willingness to enforce those standards in the first place.

Visit, But Don't Breathe the Air

The Non-Ferrous Processing Corporation operates a dilapidated factory that squats beneath an expressway in the Greenpoint neighborhood of Brooklyn. Ironically, the company owes its existence to the market for recycled materials that emerged from the environmental movement of the late 1960s. Incorporated in 1968 and now employing about a dozen people, the company reprocesses materials such as wire and batteries by melting them down.

Non-Ferrous's main pollutant is lead, a particularly nasty substance as far as air pollutants go, completely foreign to the human body. Lead breathed into the lungs enters the bloodstream to attack many essential body functions, such as the blood-producing system and the kidneys. It can also kill fetuses, produce premature births, and cause birth defects. In children, long-term exposure to even small amounts of lead has been linked to numerous behavioral problems, from poor school performance to hyperactivity. The National Center for Health Statistics estimates four percent of the nation's children—about 500,000—have high levels of lead in their blood. For urban minority children, the figure jumps to almost 20 percent.

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The problems produced by lead in the blood do not stop when the source is removed. Lead accumulates in the bones and teeth, and during stress or fever it may be released, causing acute poisoning long after the initial exposure.

The 1970 Clean Air Act set specific standards for numerous air pollutants, many of them much less harmful than lead. However, strong industry lobbying kept lead off this list and it was not until 1977 that a lawsuit by environmental groups forced the EPA to come up with a lead standard. To enforce this standard, New York State passed a law requiring companies such as Non-Ferrous to remove 99 percent of the lead from their emissions. The company repeatedly has violated the EPA standard—a 1979 EPA test showed the air around Non-Ferrous containing three times the permissible amount of lead—and never complied with the New York law.

Despite the lack of a specific lead standard from 1970 to 1977, the Clean Air Act still required Non-Ferrous to obtain a federal emissions permit. And because its tests showed the company emitted over 100 tons a year in lead and other pollutants, EPA considered Non-Ferrous a major polluter and a "possible health hazard." This meant EPA itself was responsible for insuring compliance with the law, rather than state and local government officials assigned to monitor smaller polluters.

So EPA should have been watching Non-Ferrous from 1970. But that was a bit difficult, considering that until 1979 EPA had absolutely no idea the company existed. Non-Ferrous had made itself invisible by means of a simple stratagem: it refused to get the required permit. The company could have been shut down for this offense, but with the EPA making no effort to track down Non-Ferrous, even after the 1977 standards went into effect, company officials figured the money saved from avoiding government regulation outweighed the cost of being discovered. How right they were.

Slow Motion Enforcement

With EPA asleep at the wheel, responsibility for Non-Ferrous fell to New York City's Department of Environmental Protection. The DEP finally stumbled upon the company in 1973; finding no permit on file, it fined Non-Ferrous $300 and ordered it to get one. The company ignored the order, which resulted in more fines. New York State Assemblyman Joseph Lentol says an employee for the city once told him Non-Ferrous had been fined "between $25 and $300 over and over again since 1973."

If that sounds like second-hand evidence, it is. When Lentol, the EPA, and I tried to get records to verify these fines, none could be found. "We don't have a computer system," a city clerk told me. "I wouldn't even know where to look." The city's air enforcement chief, Samuel Stempler, simply offered a "no comment" to my inquiries.

(From Stempler's position, there's good reason to be evasive. In 1979 the city's Department of Investigation concluded not only that the DEP had been "remarkably lenient" in levying fines, but that less than half those paltry sums was ever collected.)

After taking nine years just to discover Non-Ferrous's pollution, EPA took almost three more years to force it to obey the law.

When the federal government finally discovered Non-Ferrous in 1979, it wasn't EPA that got there first, but OSHA. In May its inspectors toured the factory and found so many serious violations of health and safety standards it didn't need to bother with the trivial ones. Employees were working around vats of splashing, molten lead without the required eye and face protection equipment. The air in the factory never had been tested despite the known presence of large amounts of lead and asbestos. Protective clothing worn by workers was strewn about the lunchroom, which meant employees, in effect, were eating lead with their sandwiches.

Most important, OSHA discovered all ten of the company's line employees had lead in their blood in amounts exceeding the public health standard of 40 micrograms per 100 milliliters. According to OSHA's standard text on industrial materials, "Lead levels in the 30-40 microgram range will produce headaches, dizziness, abdominal pains, vomiting, insomnia, pallor, weight loss, and amnesia in *almost all cases*" (emphasis added). In addition, a 1980 study by the National Academy of Science concluded that lead levels in this range were "even more dangerous than previously thought," capable of causing chromosomal abnormalities and malfunctions of the reproductive system.

This isn't the worst of it. When company president Samuel Worth found out his employees were

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victims of lead poisoning *he treated them himself.* And he did so, according to a later OSHA report, without notifying them of their condition or the dangers of the therapy. The "cure" for lead poisoning is a treatment known as chelation, which captures lead in the blood and releases it through the urine. Administering the therapy without a medical license is illegal, for a very good reason: "He could have overdosed people, damaged their kidneys, or they could have gone into trauma from an allergic reaction," according to Dr. Stephen Schultz, medical coordinator of the Lead Poisoning Control program in the city's health department.

OSHA didn't bother to determine if this actually had happened. For practicing medicine without a license, it fined Worth $400.

With All Deliberate Speed

With such hazards inside the plant, it wouldn't have taken a great leap of logic to suspect something dangerous was coming *out* of Worth's plant. But that's not OSHA's department. And while a note or phone call from an OSHA official to his EPA counterpart might have suggested that EPA take a look, that didn't happen.

Nonetheless, EPA accidentally discovered Non-Ferrous on its own —nine years late. In November 1979 two EPA engineers were checking another plant in Greenpoint and noticed suspicious-looking smoke rising from Non-Ferrous. The engineers, about the only heroes in this story, took some initiative and checked up on the company. The first thing they discovered was that Non-Ferrous still had no valid permit on file. They also discovered that the company had pollution control equipment but was not using it.

These findings sent EPA's vast enforcement apparatus whirring—sort of. Two months passed without action. Then, in January 1980 EPA ordered Non-Ferrous to turn on its pollution control equipment within 30 days or face fines of $25,000 a day. Impressive? Not to Non-Ferrous. "The company ignored our letters and canceled the meetings we set up to discuss the problem," recalls Richard Cahill, EPA's chief press officer. "They were extremely stubborn." The expensive-to-operate pollution control equipment remained idle.

Its bluff called, EPA beat a hasty retreat. As a fallback, the agency ordered the company to test its smokestack within 30 days, or face more penalties. Again, the company ignored the order.

It took EPA five more months to come up with its next tactic, which turned out to be conditional surrender. In May 1980 it dumped the case on New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation with instructions to negotiate a settlement with the company. Non-Ferrous officials, no doubt sensing a chance for much more favorable treatment, finally showed up for a few meetings. But when the company again balked at the thought of a stack test, the state threatened more fines, at which point Non-Ferrous walked out of the negotiations. In July, powerless even to go into the factory and test the stack, the state shuffled the case back to the EPA. "To tell you the truth," admitted a DEC engineer, "the only thing we can do in a factory is check for illegally bagged deer."

Once again it was time to shift tactics. The EPA produced a computer model suggesting Non-Ferrous's lead emissions were much higher than originally thought. But rather than use the new estimate in pressing its lawsuit, the agency decided to seek an emergency court injunction to close the plant down as a "health hazard."

To help prove Non-Ferrous's operations actually were harming people, the EPA convinced the New York City Health Department to test the

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blood of 1,200 children living near the plant. Twenty-one showed dangerous amounts of lead, two severe enough to require hospitalization. The evidence, however, didn't point conclusively to Non-Ferrous. The location of the children's homes indicated that the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, not the plant, was the *main* source of the lead poisoning (leaded gasoline burned in automobiles is the largest source of airborne lead). While the Health Department concluded that Non-Ferrous's emissions contributed to the problem, EPA knew the evidence wouldn't stand up in court.

More important than whether EPA's regulations are lax or strict is the agency's willingness to enforce them in the first place.

But EPA knew that *even before it ordered the blood tests*. The Clean Air Act as it's now written puts such a heavy burden of proof on the agency that an emergency health injunction is almost impossible to get. What's more, EPA could have shut the plant down anyway because Non-Ferrous still had no permit.

The injunction move actually was an effort to arouse public indignation in hope of forcing the company to comply with the law without EPA's playing the heavy. The tactic produced public indignation, but not much else. At a community meeting, EPA representatives were shouted down by angry residents. Brooklyn Councilman Abraham Gerges offered to lead a movement "to close the place down." Assemblyman Joseph Lentol pledged that he would "immediately obtain an injunction against the company." Although neither ever took legal action, their statements had one great effect: inflammation. One health department official described the atmosphere as "hysteria, culminating in a vigilante mentality." The factory was vandalized. The emissions continued.

By October 1980, one year after discovering Non-Ferrous, EPA was back at square one. At this point the agency finally filed its original lawsuit against the company—the one mentioned in the brief *Times* account. The $15-million fine was based on a penalty of $25,000 a day, beginning with the discovery of the violations and multiplied by two because EPA considered the company's violations "willful."

It was at this point that Non-Ferrous began to get a little nervous—nervous, not scared. The Carter administration had long made clear to EPA officials that "plea bargaining" was the preferred course in all such lawsuits. When Reagan was elected in 1980 pledging to loosen onerous environmental regulations, an actual day in court seemed even less likely.

Negotiations with Non-Ferrous began in December 1980. EPA reported immediate progress: it had "set up a dialogue" with the company. In other words, Non-Ferrous was finally answering EPA's phone calls and showing up at meetings. While emissions at the plant continued to exceed standards, progress continued until June 1981, when a tentative settlement finally was reached.

At this point all the necessary paperwork disappeared into the nether regions of the bureaucracy. "We're just waiting for headquarters to dot the i's and cross the t's," an EPA lawyer assured me in January 1982, six months later. Four more months passed, with no final agreements. One finally came in May 1982, but wasn't effective until mid-July, after it was printed in the *Federal Register*.

For its litany of repeated violations the agreement stipulated a penalty against Non-Ferrous of $12,500—less than one tenth of one percent of the originally threatened fine. The agreement also called for the company to spend $250,000 on air pollution control equipment by July 1984—two years after the effective date of the agreements. This is the equipment the law required the company to have in 1977, when the lead standards took effect. The cost of the equipment will be defrayed partially by tax credits.

Whether Non-Ferrous will live up to its agreement is another matter. Though Worth refused to return a half dozen phone calls I made to him over the course of two years, a lawyer for the company assured me that Non-Ferrous really *wanted* to cooperate with the EPA. As proof, the lawyer pointed to tests conducted in the summer of 1980 and the spring of 1981 that showed the company had turned on its old—albeit inadequate—pollution control equipment. But one wonders who was cooperating with whom. Though the tests occurred while the EPA was threatening Non-Ferrous with lawsuits, the agency had the decency to tell the company beforehand when the tests would occur.

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One also can't help but wonder how upset the EPA will be if Non-Ferrous doesn't live up to the agreement. Gorsuch isn't exactly a stickler for legalities when it comes to lead pollution, an attitude revealed last December when accounts of a meeting with a New Mexican gasoline refiner were leaked to the press. Officials of the Thriftway Company asked Gorsuch to exempt it from a pending regulation requiring it to reduce the lead in its gasolines. There was no need for a waiver, Thriftway officials said they were told. Gorsuch told them that when the regulations came up soon for review she intended either to relax them or abolish them. In the meantime, the company needn't worry about being prosecuted. (This August, a month after an internal EPA memo surfaced that concluded lead pollution levels were probably much higher than measurement techniques indicated, the agency reversed its position and proposed toughening those standards. The black hat is now being worn by the Office of Management and Budget, which is trying to water down the regulations.)

Speedy Resolution

Tests show that the air around Non-Ferrous is somewhat cleaner now that the company at least has turned on its old pollution control equipment. For the EPA, that seems to be enough. After more than a decade, "cooperation" has finally triumphed.

The residents of Greenpoint who've been exposed to the plant's toxic offerings for that time understandably don't take much solace in this belated victory. And perhaps more important, other polluters probably are drawing yet another lesson from this story. If recalcitrance really does pay, and the punishment for years of illegally spewing poisons into the air is less than what the company could make in a single week, why bother to cooperate?

This is why the case of Non-Ferrous is even more dismaying than it might originally appear. There was nothing unusual about its strategy for evading the law, no fancy legal footwork or secret payoffs, no flexing of political muscle. Keep a low profile. Don't return EPA's phone calls. Boycott meetings. Never promise actually to do anything unless it's absolutely necessary. It's a simple strategy, and one that's well-known and time-tested in the toxic emissions fraternity. As one EPA spokesman told me, "Believe it or not, this case actually moved faster than many other cases do." ■

THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY

Journalism Award

for July 1982 is awarded to

Carol J. Loomis, *Fortune*

In "The Madness of Executive Compensation" (July 12), Loomis carefully details how salary increases and huge bonuses for corporate executives bear no relationship to performance.

Michael R. Gordon, *National Journal*

In the July 24 issue, Gordon provides evidence of inadequate and biased testing and evaluation of multi-billion-dollar Pentagon weapons such as the Pershing II missile, the Patriot anti-aircraft missile, the AMRAAM air-to-air missile, and the Aegis cruiser.

Claire O'Connor, *Wilkes Barre (Pa.) Times Leader*

O'Connor explains in a six-part series what happened when a group of well-intentioned but inexperienced people tried to build a multi-million-dollar sewer system for their community.

The Washington Monthly wishes to recognize the writers and publishers who share our purpose of trying to describe how the political system really works, to determine why it succeeds, and why it fails, and to suggest ways in which it might be improved.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper or magazine article (or series of articles) on our political system. Nominations from any newspaper or magazine in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation.

The award for articles published in September will be announced in the December issue. Nominations will close October 15. Nominations should be accompanied by two copies of the article or articles.

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Burying the Picket

by Stephen Schlossberg

Every so often an event takes place that doesn't grab much attention but that has genuine potential to change this country for the better. I think one of those critical events was the settlement this spring between the United Auto Workers and the management at Ford and General Motors, a deal that included wage concessions by the union to the tune of five to six billion dollars.

Did I just say that wage concessions by a union are a good thing? Am I still the strong union man I've been all my life? The answer to both questions is yes. For years, both labor and management have considered concessions something to be pulled out of the other side like a tooth. They were punishment to be endured only for the purpose of settlement. But in this case, if you can believe it, labor's wage concessions were sought not only by management, but also understood and agreed to by the UAW, which opened negotiations six months before the expiration of its contracts.

Some see the settlement as an ominous transfer of power from workers to industry. Others openly worry about the price the auto companies paid for the concessions—that is, the long-range consequences of giving workers some job security and unions a piece of the action. But whatever the risk for both sides, there was an even greater danger in trying to deal with 1982's problems in yesterday's

Stephen Schlossberg was general counsel and director of government affairs for the United Auto Workers. He presently practices labor law in Washington.

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terms. Something new *had* to be done.

When any unions make substantial concessions, it's easy to suspect that they are backing off only temporarily—in the face of layoffs and the recession. And time may prove this to be the case. But there is something else—something far more encouraging—at work here, I think: the idea of unions caring more about the basic health of American industry has transcended the pain and suffering of this particular recession. Labor is beginning to realize that low productivity, negative balance of payments, poor quality, high prices, and the rest of the American economy's long-term ailments need to be tackled head on. Employers are beginning to realize that workers who share austerity should also share prosperity.

This kind of sea-change in attitudes is already in evidence. All across the country wage settlements are down. In fact, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly two million union workers covered by major collective bargaining agreements reached in the first six months of 1982 accepted pay raises averaging only three percent, compared to 7.7 percent last year. Nearly three-fifths of those workers received no pay increase at all, except those brought through cost-of-living adjustments, which were minor this year.

The reason this isn't as alarming for American workers as it sounds is that in this recession, labor is getting something in exchange for its wage restraint, not only in the auto industry, but in much of the rest of the economy as well. Take the United Food and Commercial Workers. They've just negotiated new contracts with meatpackers, freezing wages until August 1985 and deferring cost-of-living increases for more than a year. The quo for that quid is that management pledged not to close more packing houses for 18 months, and to provide advance warning of closures after that.

This approach, seen most dramatically in the auto settlement, is a major departure from a bitter history of labor-management disputes in this country. Since their earliest days, American labor relations have been characterized by confrontation—the "hate the boss" and "keep the union in its place" syndromes. In most cases, the very essence of the relationship—from organizing to contract negotiation, to contract administration—has been driven by legal considerations instead of principles of human relations. Unions use the law to organize and advocate more for their members; management uses the law (particularly the courts) to try to smash unions. Complicated doctrines of law have been developed to deal with such basic matters as plant closings and subcontracting. Collective bargaining has joined litigation as the quintessence of the adversarial system.

This adversarial relationship can never be ended entirely—the fight against unfair labor practices, for example, will always require confrontation through legal avenues. But it should nonetheless be clear that labor and management simply cannot continue to be at each other's throats. Employers must no longer seek a "union-free environment," nor must unions berate management on "Big Business Days." Short-run "victories" won in bruising battles serve the long-run interests of neither party. "Winning at any cost" means losing for the country as a whole. Does that sound so radical? For most participants in labor-management disputes, it has in the past.

Of course, delegalizing labor-management relations—breaking out of the barriers, patterns, and assumptions of the past—is easier said than done. But the auto bargaining of 1982 can serve as a model for labor-management relations throughout the economy. Put another way, if it *doesn't* serve as a model, the consequences could be serious indeed. Adversarial labor-management relations may be a luxury the American economy can simply no longer afford.

A Fair Swap

Why did the UAW and the auto companies decide to sit down and renegotiate? The key words are "security," "sharing," and "survivability." The workers needed assurances that jobs would be secure; the companies needed assurances that high wages would not help put them out of business.

Here are the highlights of the Ford and GM agreements:

—Wage concessions of five to six billion dollars.

—Real, collectively bargained profit-sharing.

—Sharing responsibility for decision-making in the business.

—A moratorium on "outsourcing"—that is, a halt to idling plants because work is subcontracted out or sent out to foreign subsidiaries.

—Rescinding of announced decisions to close four plants (GM only).

—Pilot "lifetime employment guarantee" programs at four plants at GM, two at Ford.

—A Guaranteed Income Stream (GIS) pro-

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gram to protect workers with ten years' seniority laid off in plant closings and with 15 years' seniority in other cases, retroactive to March 1. The income stream, a percentage of take-home pay, is to flow until the worker reaches 62 or retires.

—An agreement by management to work toward maintaining the current job volume in the UAW national bargaining unit.

—A new, *jointly governed* program of training and retraining for current and displaced workers, including training of workers for jobs *outside* the industry.

—Continuation and improvement of Employee Involvement (Ford) and Quality of Work Life (GM) programs.

—Creation of an Occupational Health Advisory Board.

—A strengthened Supplementary Unemployment Benefit program with prompt resumption of payments to laid-off workers.

This, then, is the shape of things to come—security, sharing, and survivability. Real security would not mean protecting incompetent or dishonest workers, or outmoded, useless facilities, but it would mean preventing companies from closing plants or laying off workers because their profits aren't high enough.

Sharing is simple enough: giving each side the good with the bad is a matter of plain equity.

Survivability should not mean stripping wages and benefits to the bone. But it should mean keeping labor costs from so exceeding productivity increases that they jeopardize the life of the company. Unions know the viability of an enterprise depends on many things other than labor costs. They should also recognize, however, that labor costs are an important factor, and that there can be no security, or sharing, or anything else if the business doesn't survive.

Some say the labor movement should fight harder than ever rather than seek accommodation with management, warning that after unions have been debilitated by savage foreign competition and horrendous unemployment, what is billed as cooperation will end up as cooptation. But as good as "class struggle" sounds in the union hall, it doesn't help solve these problems.

Worse, the adversarial approach embraced by union militants plays into the hands of employers who hire union-busting "consultants" to help them, and an administration in Washington more antagonistic to organized labor than any in a half century.

For its part, management should be aware that what's involved in a cooperative approach is a fair trade—not a capitulation by labor. Union concessions alone will never become the norm in the U.S., and it would be folly for industry to assume that a less profitable year than projected, or even a loss, is an automatic ticket to reopening a labor agreement to reduce wages and benefits.

The fact that many companies are assuming just that is the greatest danger to the success of a cooperative approach. Employers of all kinds and sizes are trying to open contracts and force union concessions because they've had a bad year. Unfortunately, most seek to accomplish cost-cutting without offering any quid pro quo or even building a climate of trust. Clearly, such a strategy will not work. Union members and officials have memories long enough to recall that in the "glory years" of huge, unanticipated profits, no employer volunteered to reopen the contract and share the wealth.

The most flagrant threat to a cooperative future is the corporate executives who don't see any reason why they should sacrifice along with the unions. International Harvester, for instance, started 1982 by asking the UAW for $200 million in wage concessions. The company, which lost $393 million in 1981, made this request shortly after paying $6-million-worth of year-end bonuses to its managers. After the UAW declined to make any sacrifices, or even talk about it, the company rescinded the bonuses. GM's approach was equally outrageous. On April 16, the very day the GM-UAW concession agreement was executed, GM sent a proxy solicitation to stockholders that would have made it easier for executives to obtain bonuses. It too was forced to back off.

This kind of behavior makes some people skeptical that the cooperative approach can ever work. Others simply maintain that workers will never sacrifice wages for other goals—it's just not in their makeup. The problem with both these views is that they ignore not just the evidence of the auto agreements (Ford workers, dealing with enlightened management, ratified the agreement by an impressive 73 percent), but also the practicality of a cooperative approach. Support for the idea has little to do with altruism. The primary motivation for moving into a new era in labor-management relations is nothing more than enlightened self-interest—for the workers, for the companies, and for the ability of the American economy to function effectively in the future. ■

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WHO'S WHO in the Administration

If you read only *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times,* you may have missed it, but the Reagan White House is at war—with itself. The bitter infighting is not a matter of speculation; it is a fact. The best account, written by Jack Nelson of *The Los Angeles Times,* has been repeatedly confirmed on background by White House aides. Apparently even **Michael Deaver**, the only high-level aide who wouldn't talk to Nelson, has said the story was right on target.

"This place is really bitter," one White House staffer told Nelson, "as wicked a place for infighting as I've seen, and I'm a pretty good infighter." By September the situation had, if anything, worsened. It is widely believed within the White House that large-scale staff changes will take place shortly after the November congressional elections.

Reagan's easy-going manner belies a poisonous atmosphere on his staff that rivals or exceeds the infighting of earlier administrations: **Richard Goodwin** versus **Theodore Sorensen** under Kennedy, **Marvin Watson** versus **Bill Moyers** under Johnson, **Charles Colson** versus **John Ehrlichman** under Nixon, **Robert Hartmann** versus **Richard Cheney** under Ford.

The Reagan squabbling most resembles the last of these, with **Edwin Meese** in the role of Hartmann, the old, trusted confidante whose inefficiency has lost him the respect of much of the staff. **James Baker** has much in common with Ford's chief of staff, Cheney—not an old friend of the president, but tough, competent, determined to dominate.

The difference between the Reagan snake pit and earlier administrations', however, is that the bitterness reportedly now extends much further down into the staff ranks. Some Baker loyalists, for instance, are known to agree on the larger battle but to hate each other all the same.

One possible explanation for the intensity of the jealousies and backbiting is that Ronald Reagan has delegated so much power to his subordinates—far more than any modern president—that the stakes are significantly higher than they have been in the past.

In

WHITE HOUSE

Chairman, Council of Economic Advisers—**Martin S. Feldstein** has been a professor of economics at Harvard University and president of the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Assistant to the President for Presidential Personnel—**Helene von Damm** has been a close assistant to Reagan since 1966.

Special Assistant to the President, Director of Appointments and Scheduling, Office of Management and Budget—**William Sadleir** has been executive vice president of Standard Energy Corporation.

Deputy Assistant to the President—**Michael R. Gale** has been a legislative liaison for the American Israel Public Affairs Commission in Washington.

Senior Economist in the Office of Economics and Planning, Office of Management and Budget—**Mark Wasserman** was an economist at the Federal Reserve Board.

STATE

Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs—**R. John Hughes** has been director of Voice of America.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS

ACTION
Deputy Director, Peace Corps—**Edward A. Curran** was director of the National Institute of Education, a position from which he was ousted by Education Secretary Terrel H. Bell last summer.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
Member—**William A. Webb** has been deputy attorney general of Pennsylvania.

International Communications Agency
Associate Director for Programs—**W. Scott Thompson** has been an associate professor at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

Merit Systems Protection Board
Member—**Dennis Devaney** was with the Washington law firm Tighe, Curhan, Piliero, and Case.

Out

WHITE HOUSE

Assistant to the President, Office of Presidential Personnel—**E. Pendleton James** will join a private sector executive recruiting firm.

JUSTICE

Director of the National Institute of Justice—**James L. Underwood** will return to the staff of the University of South Carolina Law School.

STATE

Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs—**Dean Fischer** has resigned.

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HOW THE RIGHT LEARNED TO LOVE EARL WARREN

by Robert F. Nagel

At first glance, California Attorney General George Deukmejian and Alabama federal judge Frank M. Johnson have about as much in common as Barry Goldwater and George McGovern. Deukmejian, now the Republican candidate for governor, is heir apparent to Ronald Reagan's California legacy. Johnson, whose landmark civil rights decisions were pivotal events in the desegregation of the South, is the quintessential liberal judicial activist, an inspiration to a whole generation that sought social justice through the courts.

But when Deukmejian was looking around for a big issue to make a name as attorney general, he didn't follow the path of the dominant conservative thinkers of recent years, the men whose opposition to liberalism so often had taken the form of attacks on court decisions handed down by liberal judges. Decisions on abortion, busing, the rights of the accused, and other controversial issues had led these conservatives to decry a judiciary they believed was twisting the law to its own ends, running wild with a power never granted by the Constitution. Who elected these judges? When was this meddling going to stop?

Robert F. Nagel teaches at the University of Colorado School of Law.

This is what conservatives have been asking in the years since the Warren Court, and it is what you would expect from the George Deukmejians of the nation.

Instead, Deukmejian took a leaf from the book of Judge Frank Johnson. Johnson had made a practice of seizing control of Alabama's prisons and mental hospitals, demanding that their conditions conform to standards set out in "institutional" lawsuits. Now Deukmejian is pressing for the same kind of judicial authority, this time to protect school children from violence. Where Johnson had ruled that mental patients could not be confined in an institution unless they received proper medical treatment and decent living conditions, Deukmejian asked California judges to rule that students couldn't be required to attend school unless they received enough police protection against violence to ensure they would get an adequate education.

In demanding programs to prevent violence in schools, Deukmejian rested his case on the same legal theories Johnson had used—constitutional provisions involving due process, cruel and unusual punishment, and equal protection under the law. He simply substituted violence against students for the poor medical treatment, squalid

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conditions, and other miseries in the mental institutions struck down by the courts at the behest of liberals.

Deukmejian hasn't been alone in turning to the courts to pursue conservative goals. In fact, before long it may be the conservatives who routinely press for social change through the courts and the liberals who embrace theories of judicial restraint. Earl Warren may end up being a role model for the Right after all.

Consider, for example, the expansive interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment that during the 1960s allowed liberals to achieve voting rights reform. The interpretation is now used as a basis for the Human Life Bill, an effort to force reversal of the Supreme Court's famous decision establishing the right to abortion. Or consider that the major argument liberals used to win the right to abortion was the concept of a woman's right to privacy as an individual. Some conservative legal theorists who oppose abortion suggest that privacy be used to protect the traditional family.

Similarly, liberals' theoretical arguments for expansive use of judicial power (arguments that helped unleash the courts in areas such as apportionment reform and environmental protection) were used recently to argue for judicial boldness in voiding the extension of the ratification period for the Equal Rights Amendment.

Whose Cox is Gored?

Conservatives have not been known for a desire to steal the thunder from their liberal adversaries, but it's happening with some frequency in federal court nowadays. Recently, for instance, conservative lawyers from the "public interest" law firm James Watt ran before coming to Washington sued to establish personal liability for the federal Bureau of Land Management officials who allegedly failed to protect private land from the damage done by wild horses (the horses in this case symbolizing Big Government and liberal sentimentality). What was the legal precedent for making government officials personally liable when their actions cause damage? By now the answer should be obvious: the efforts of liberal attorneys to make federal law enforcement officers pay damages to those whose civil rights they had abused during illegal searches.

Though we're not yet at the stage where liberals routinely urge judicial restraint, signs are developing. Consider the case of Professor Owen Fiss of the Yale Law School.

Fiss recently coauthored an article in *The New Republic* attacking Justice William Rehnquist's conservative judicial activism. The article criticizes Rehnquist for repudiating precedent, distorting the meaning of prior cases, substituting slogans for reasoning, and underhandedly creating his own precedents "out of asides." Fiss writes: "He places apparently inconsequential statements unobtrusively in one opinion, only to use them several opinions later—when he makes them seem of central importance. . . ."

These are serious charges. But there is considerable awkwardness in Fiss's making them. Fiss has long been an ardent defender of the Warren Court's liberal breakthroughs, and legal scholars (including Fiss) know that many of them were justified by distorting, ignoring, or repudiating precedents. Nor was the Warren Court above the use of slogans—even the one that Fiss criticizes Rehnquist for indulging in ("one man, one cell") was a takeoff on the Warren Court's famous "one man, one vote." Rehnquist might be guilty of Fiss's accusations, but he also might have picked up his somewhat seamy tactics from the Court that Fiss and other liberal academics so admire.

In fact, Rehnquist might have learned some of his bad habits from Owen Fiss himself. In 1977 Fiss wrote an article in the *Yale Law Journal* describing the "tactics" used by one of the most liberal members of the Court, Justice Brennan. Fiss recounts that Brennan wanted to find a way to increase the public's access to federal courts despite an earlier Supreme Court decision that limited such access. Brennan, said Fiss, "chose to bore from within." He attacked the precedent "by indirection." Although Brennan's reasoning was "weak" and "artificial," the decision he wrote had the advantage of "revolutionary promise": "Like a diagram with footprints and arrows, it showed the way around all the . . . obstacles to federal injunctive relief. . . ." Fiss described with admiration how Justice Brennan dropped a "puzzling" footnote, which appeared to retreat from his open-access position. Fiss explained, "In retrospect it appears that Justice Brennan made the concession to obtain Justice White's vote . . . and thus to create a broad spectrum of support. . . ." He then described how White later seized on Brennan's footnote as being of central importance to the resolution of a subsequent case, just as Brennan had hoped when he first inserted the unobtrusive footnote. When criticizing Justice Rehnquist, Fiss labels such tactics "failings of craft." When extolling Justice Brennan, Fiss describes them as "ex-

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pressive of . . . judicial statesmanship."

Other liberals also seem to be developing a fastidiousness when faced with the prospect of free-wheeling judicial power exercised by conservatives. Archibald Cox, Harvard law professor and chairman of Common Cause, recently told the House Judiciary Committee that the proposed balanced budget amendment to the Constitution would thrust the courts into policy areas where judges lack experience, expertise, and legal standards. He cautioned that the judiciary should not intrude into executive and legislative domains (i.e., the budget), and he intoned dire warnings about trivializing and politicizing the Constitution.

Cox's opposition to the foolish amendment is legitimate, but there was something laughable about the portentous tone of his particular arguments. After 30 years of judges imposing reapportionment plans, devising education programs, and determining the specifications of prison cells, the irony of Cox's remarks was unmistakable. Here was a champion of judicial activism—a man who used the courts to help bring down an entire administration—saying that, well, maybe judges can't be so trusted after all.

Full-Court Repress

Latter-day fans of Earl Warren may prefer to forget it, but in truth the history of judicial activism has a persistently conservative streak. It was evident as long ago as the Court's extraordinary conclusion in *Dred Scott* that slaves could not be persons. In the mid-1930s, the Court engaged in a spirited campaign to stop the economic reforms of the New Deal, declaring several of Franklin Roosevelt's alphabet agencies (the AAA, the NRA) unconstitutional. This and much else made Justice Frankfurter and many of his liberal followers quite skeptical of judicial activism.

So in the early days of the Warren Court, liberals had to work hard to overcome an aversion to judicial power. Now, after years of close association with judicial activism, liberals may have to swallow their pride and return to their earlier position. In fact, a serious reconsideration of the wisdom of heavy reliance on judicial power to achieve a better world, whether liberal or conservative, has been put off too long. Liberals have had so much fun in court in recent decades that they seem to have repressed some dirty truths about the nature of judicial power.

The first truth about such power is that it is elitist. It makes those who depend on it elitist. This happens whether the courts try to advance the interests of the politically powerless or of the wealthy. It happens because of the nature of adjudication.

Judicial activism is fundamentally undemocratic, implying that a few legal minds are better equipped to rule than everyone else.

Adjudication in federal courts is the imposition of a decision by unelected officials. Any ambitious effort to use adjudication to achieve progress, no matter how defined, creates a powerful emotional need to rationalize undemocratic decision-making. If you are undertaking a sustained strategy of reform by adjudication you must first convince yourself that people are not able to govern themselves. Otherwise, what justifies bypassing the political process? Liberal law professors have been especially adept at providing such rationalizations. Some justify judicial control over broad areas of social policy by claiming the political process tends to exclude high-level moral discourse. (A deficiency that, needless to say, law professors and judges, squinting at small print in heavy treatises and briefs, think themselves particularly well-suited to redress.)

It has long been fashionable to argue that the public can't be expected to appreciate certain sophisticated freedoms that require the subordination of immediate self-interest. It is thought, for example, that the public, dismayed by rampant public pornography or the rules that restrict police search, foolishly will prefer giving up their constitutional rights for reasonably decent, safe streets. Judges, the reasoning goes, must be active in such areas for fear that the short-sighted public will run amok, censoring political views or dispensing with adversary trials. Even when the public sentiments don't hint at making these fears a reality, it is believed necessary for the judiciary to thwart the popular will.

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Another influential theory of judicial activism holds that the public simply can't be trusted with decisions that might enable a majority to exclude a minority from the political process. Since politics is rife with such opportunities, this rationalization allows for a rather generous exception to the principle of self-government.

It hardly need be said that such attitudes, whether starkly expressed or not, are fundamentally undemocratic, implying that a few legal minds are better equipped to rule than everyone else. Ironically, as conservatives increasingly embrace judicial activism, they risk eliminating the last vestiges of populism that remain in Reagan's political movement.

Court-imposed reform drives a wedge between reformers and the governed. In a lawsuit, one side wins and the other loses. The winner basks in the glory of constitutional vindication while the loser is correspondingly disgraced. Court decisions flow from legal arguments that are often framed as uncompromising matters of principle, advanced by litigants who choose a set of facts that are themselves frequently extreme. In short, the dynamics of litigation encourage each party to want to punch the other on the way out of court.

It may surprise liberals, but the history of judicial activism is persistently conservative.

To win a desegregation lawsuit, it is necessary to convince the judge that unbalanced schools didn't happen inadvertently, but by the design of school officials who were racists. (In the process, it is normal, of course, for the litigator to convince himself of the same thing.) The moral elevation required for a good free speech claim makes it helpful to view those favoring pornography laws as the point-men in a cunning plot to stifle all political dissent. Those with honest reservations about abortion are thought of as papists intent on abolishing the separation of church and state or, at minimum, as misguided authoritarians who want to keep women barefoot and pregnant by violating their "fundamental" (it helps to be endlessly fervent) constitutional rights.

Whether these are genuine sentiments or employed only as strategy, the political toll for liberals has been heavy. The exodus of blue-collar workers from the Democratic party that in 1980 helped elect Reagan was in response partly to the hostility directed at them by some of the "enlightened" professional class that dominated the party. The liberal strategy of broad-scale reform by judicial decree had encouraged liberals to view a large segment of the governed as not worthy of trust. The public, in turn, sensed this lack of trust, or at least sensed that its interests and those of a democracy-fearing professional class were not the same.

The Defense Never Rests

The second truth about judicial policy-making is that it often intensifies social conflict. The mythology that drives many constitutional lawyers, of course, holds just the opposite to be true. Some reformers still believe that intractable moral disagreements somehow can be put to rest by an emphatic pronouncement by the Supreme Court in a "landmark case." But this only confuses the theater of adjudication with the reality of social conflict.

In fact, judicial decisions often focus and magnify political disputes. This results not from the politics of those using the courts at the moment but from the nature of the adjudication itself. Positions are presented forcefully by professional advocates. The lawsuit itself is highly visible, and its methods—explicit findings of fact and elaborate justifications—heighten the tendency to rivet attention on the nature of the disagreement.

It was only natural, then, that the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade,* establishing the right to abortion, infuriated the losers. Their faces were rubbed in a 73-page repudiation of their profoundly felt position on what they considered to be the moral imperative of protecting fetal life. In the years since that decision the anti-abortion forces have gained political strength and tried every means imaginable to limit the right to abortion—shrewdly drawn homicide statutes, parental and spousal consent provisions, funding restrictions, and so on. Anyone who thought that the "landmark" abortion decision would end political debate on this moral dilemma was dreaming.

Eventually, heavy reliance on judicial decision-making undercuts social cohesion. Constitutional interpretations constantly direct public attention

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to what is debatable or unsettled. Does everyone agree that slavery is immoral and illegal? Then courts will be asked whether a patient's unpaid labor in a mental hospital is treatment or slavery. Is it clearly wrong to censor political dissent? Then a court will be asked to extend First Amendment protections to nude dancing.

Subjected to a constant barrage of novel constitutional interpretations, the public comes to believe that nothing is settled, nothing is solidly agreed upon. It's also common for the public to begin holding the judicial process and even the Constitution in disdain for what it perceives as ridiculous legal interpretations. In the 1930s the Supreme Court extended the principle of states rights so far that it became fashionable (and still is in some circles) to dismiss the idea of federalism altogether. Similarly, the courts have extended the right against self-incrimination to a point that some argue that the police are prevented from engaging in even informal conversations with suspects. When lawyers present elaborate justifications for extending free speech protection to nude dancing, can the public be blamed if it begins to doubt the seriousness of freedom of speech?

Dependence on judicial decision-making helps make political debate nasty. If the New Right seems mean-spirited and intolerant, liberals should consider that it includes groups that have been on the losing end of major constitutional lawsuits for three decades. Repudiated on school prayer, busing, police practices, and abortion, conservatives have felt abused, ignored, and demeaned. Liberals should contemplate their reactions if put in a similar situation. How angry and desperate would they be if a Justice Rehnquist were to dominate public policy for 30 years? Indeed, imagination is not necessary. Progressives only need recall the 1930s when fury at a conservatively activist judiciary led to Roosevelt's court-packing plan.

Rights and Wrongs

A third truth about judicially imposed reform is that it distorts public debate by concentrating attention on immediate, concrete results. Lawsuits, after all, are usually resolved by labeling someone's interests as "rights." If a right has been violated, the victim naturally must have—"is entitled to"—relief. This process of defining and protecting rights is imperative, so that concern for secondary or long-run considerations tends to fade. Judicial policy-making is thus often foolishly concrete and short-sighted. Judges agonize over the proper percentage of each race that should attend public schools. They wrestle with determining the exact number of feet of urinal trough each prisoner is entitled to under the Constitution.

Court-imposed reform drives a wedge between reformers and the governed.

This obsessive concern for protecting individual rights obscures the importance of the less tangible needs of the political system. People understandably lose interest in participating in local self-government when most of the decisions about educational policy are made by a federal judge. A similar disincentive to democracy was provided by *Elrod v. Burns,* which struck down patronage systems as violating the First Amendment and dealt a blow to the political parties and the political accountability that are nourished by patronage. But in the exciting rush to protect everyone's right not to be "punished" for his beliefs, the underlying preconditions for democratic self-government seemed unimportant.

At the extreme, this emphasis on immediate results can degenerate into profound cynicism. As judges devote themselves more and more avidly to improving the world, enforcing the law seems less and less important. The even-handed, everyday application of law begins to seem pretty stale to a judge caught up in the hurly-burly of reform and the excitement of immediate accomplishment.

Those liberals who are devoted to imposing reform through judicial decree will not give up easily their special relationship with the federal courts. Too much is at stake and too many of President Carter's 260 appointments to the federal judiciary (the most any president has made) will be around for a long time. But if conservatives prove successful in wooing the judiciary in coming years, liberals can be expected to dust off their long-forgotten criticisms of judicial policy-making—rediscovering wisdom in the arguments liberal jurists like Frank M. Johnson once so firmly rejected. ■

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Jonathan Alter ON POLITICAL BOOKS

Lou Cannon is the Lou Gehrig of Reagan reporters. He must hold some sort of record for consecutive campaigns covering a politician without being sent to another beat or brought into the front office as an aide. Since 1966, when Reagan first entered politics as governor of California, Cannon has been there to make sure that "The Speech"—which he must have heard a few hundred times—sounded ever-fresh in the next morning's newspaper.

One suspects that the friendship between the two men—Cannon includes an inscribed picture from Reagan in the photo section of his new book*—goes beyond old-shoe familiarity to a kind of shared pride in this art of recreation, so essential to both politics and journalism. Which early 1930s Chicago Cub batter was at the plate when the wire went dead and radio announcer Reagan had to improvise, Cannon asked during a July 31, 1981 interview with the president, Augie Galan or Billy Jurges? In different renditions of the story over the years, Reagan had different ballplayers fouling off Dizzy Dean's imaginary pitches, and Cannon wanted to straighten it out for history. "[Reagan] thought a moment, and then said, 'It was Jurges.' "

If it's a little peculiar that Cannon would spend valuable interviewing time seeking answers to this kind of question (which only he would know to ask) it also says something about the breadth of his knowledge of Reagan's charmed past—breadth reflected in this richly detailed and well-crafted biography. His sense of Reagan as an amiable dreamer with a flair for making the rehearsed sound spontaneous may well be the essence of the man. Who else but Cannon could know that Reagan's famous "There you go again" line during his debate with Jimmy Carter had been carefully practiced beforehand?

Cannon's access to Reagan and to those aides who are the beneficiaries of what he calls the "delegated presidency" is so much better than most reporters' that the way he uses the access takes on genuine importance. When it's used well, the results are impressive. Reagan, we learn, is now so deaf that the television in the White House family quarters must be turned on so loud that no one with normal hearing can stand to stay in the room. In the Oval Office, which, Cannon notes in an effort to be fair, has bad acoustics, aides must talk to the President of the United States at the top of their voices. Reagan apparently reads more than is generally realized, but he has been known to nod off during important meetings.

One can't help thinking, though, that these details—and Cannon's occasional characterizations of Reagan as "intellectually lazy" or uninformed—have a calculated quality to them. It's as if the author knows some people around town whisper that he is too cozy with Reagan and that he occasionally pulls punches in *The Washington Post*. So he makes a special effort to walk a fine line between his natural sympathy with the man and what he perceives as the demands of the objective journalist. The result is that he almost always uses his special knowledge of Reagan to illustrate familiar criticisms.

In classic Gehrig style, Cannon touches all bases. Does it look as if he is letting Reagan off too easily on policy issues? He includes a chapter taking swipes at James Watt and Reagan's attitude toward the land. Does it seem as if Michael Deaver is the source for much of his inside information? Edwin Meese gets the biggest write-up of the top aides. Does Reagan come out looking like a thoroughly good guy? Nancy-haters see their judgment vindicated by Cannon.

All of this makes for a good, balanced biography—certainly the best so far on Reagan and his origins—but also a predictable one, and one where the relationship between a politician and a reporter who stands to benefit greatly from his election is reflected in some unsettling ways.

"You too, Lou?" Reagan asked with hurt surprise when Cannon joined other reporters before the 1976 North Carolina primary in wanting to know if Reagan would quit his challenge to President Ford. What Reagan was trying to say was that Cannon, of all people, should have known he would stay in the race, that their fates were in some way intertwined. As it turned out, Reagan did not quit. He went on to win the primary, and although he lost that year to Ford, Cannon says that without this dogged determination to stick it out, Reagan never would have been elected four years later. And indeed, at the very end of his book, the author seems almost apologetic for ever having doubted, writing that the North Carolina primary was when he liked Reagan best. He showed daring and grit. "He belonged in the White House," Cannon writes. And his chronicler, apparently, belonged there with him. ■

Jonathan Alter is an editor of The Washington Monthly.

* *Reagan*. Lou Cannon. Putnam's, $18.95.

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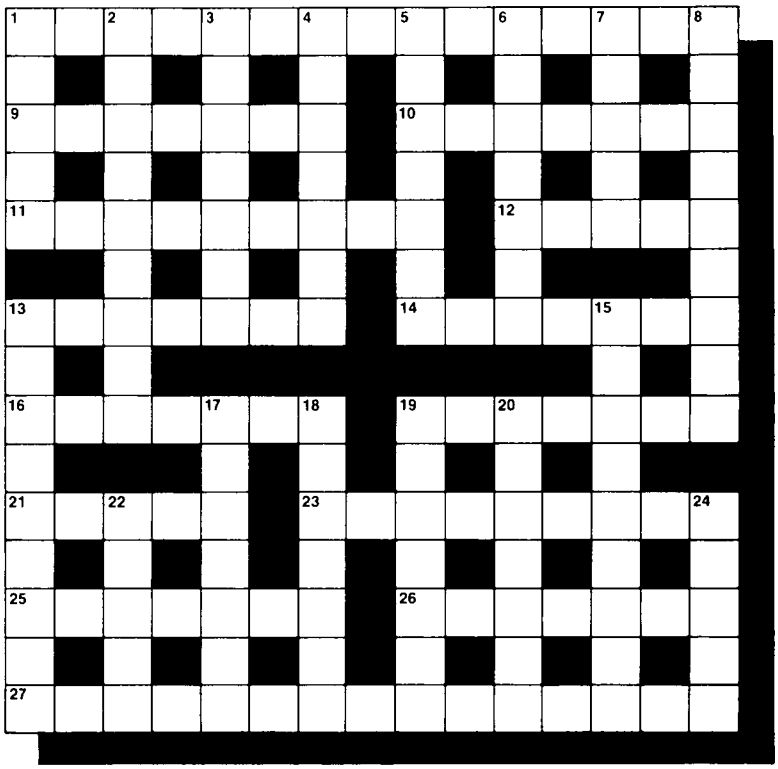
POLITICAL PUZZLE



by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word.

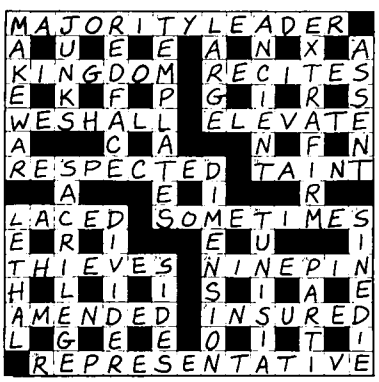
ACROSS

1. The GOP tries not to write on this. (10, 5)
9. Looks like geese. (7)
10. Trading cards? (7)
11. Cricket power plays for American League in Austria. (9)
12. Relaxed with nothing to lose outside. (5)
13. Tie knot hastily again with rope around creature. (7)
14. Part of the Constitution makes it clear. (7)
16. Relating to mind makes wild spy well-dressed. (7)
19. The heart of confused Eastern scenes. (7)
21. Mango confection in with the others. (5)
23. Clumsy, clumsy line agent. (9)
25. Ripped in weight in New Jersey. (7)
26. Made up last ten qualifications. (7)
27. White House do? (10, 5)

DOWN

1. Go mad from inflexible beliefs. (5)
2. Secluded place for transcribing army notes. (9)
3. Muddled farewell for ice hero. (7)
4. Clear distortion of lob save. (7)
5. Eastern country not applicable in Midwest. (7)
6. Red cartels broken up. (7)
7. Acid taken in dream in Oregon. (5)
8. The height of vision clarified. See, e.g., Yale. (6, 3)
13. Careful farmer-lessee takes in confused pal. (9)
15. Holds something once train assembled. (9)
17. Henry initially arranged big hat for restaurant bill complaint. (4, 3)
18. The CIA hint about beverage. (7)
19. The Spanish strangely trace classic figure. (7)
20. Expand water source in to dine. (5, 2)
22. Ahead when you open carefully. (3-2)
24. Student with too many exams? (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

The American Presidency. *Kenneth W. Thompson, ed. Univ. Press of America, $6.25.*

B.S.—The Bureaucratic Syndrome. *Byron L. Johnson, Robert Ewegen. North River Press (dist. by Everest House), $10.95.*

The Bombing Officer. *Jerome Doolittle. Dutton, $12.95.* To the handful of excellent novels about the U.S. debacle in Southeast Asia—such as Tim O'Brien's *Going After Cacciato* and Robert Stone's *Dog Soldiers*—add this tautly written, fast-moving account of the secret U.S. air war in Laos. Its main character is a young, career-minded foreign service officer, Fred Upson, assigned to evaluate the military's bombing requests to prevent civilian casualties. Upson soon realizes he, like his predecessors, is caught up in the machinations and deceits of a bureaucratic triangle that includes the CIA, the military, and the State Department. The bombs fall on civilians, though the real reasons (Are the pilots simply incompetent? Do they deliberately disregard their orders?) are never revealed.

Appropriately, there are no battle scenes here, and only one death; all reports of the war's devastation are second-hand, relayed in the accounts of refugees or buried in the bottom of file drawers. Doolittle instead focuses on the inner workings of the U.S. embassy and its inhabitants. There's the militaristic ambassador and his protocol-obsessed wife; the bright but obsequious deputy chief of mission, anxious to keep things running smoothly; the press officer who's grown so disgruntled he leaks to *The New York Times*.

This book has a stronger ring of authenticity than many non-fictional accounts of the period. That Doolittle was a member of the U.S. mission in Laos helps explain his ability to convincingly portray how even such "limited" wars can assume a momentum of their own, destroying those careers, lives, and countries that happen to get in the way.

—Phil Keisling

The Cox Report on the American Corporation. *Allan Cox. Delacorte, $21.95.*

Encounters with the Future: A Forecast of Life into the 21st Century. *Marvin Cetron, Thomas O'Toole. McGraw-Hill, $12.95.* The authors try to cover so much ground that few of their points are fleshed out enough to be convincing. Their predictions range from the obvious (a rising elderly population) to the ridiculous (longevity pills manufactured on the moon). Occasionally there's a sensible prediction that probably has never occurred to you. Everyone is aware, for instance, that robots are on the way, but what often hasn't been considered is that one of the three or four major human occupations of the next century will be that of robot technician.

—Todd Andrews

Growing Up. *Russell Baker. Congdon and Weed, $15..* A lovely book, better than Baker's best, with a new dimension of humanity added to the grace and wit to which we've become so accustomed.

—C.P.

Having It All: Love, Success, Sex, Money. *Helen Gurley Brown. Simon & Schuster, $15.95.* For me, the fun of reading *Cosmopolitan* has always been based on the assumption that the magazine is pure fantasy—that no woman in her right mind would consider propping up her breasts with masking tape to make herself look more voluptuous. Wrong. After reading this book by *Cosmo*'s editor, I'm sure every bit of inane advice given in the magazine is, sadly enough, meant to be followed faithfully.

Gurley Brown writes as the self-appointed "mouseburger" mentor. Mouseburgers, she says, are "people who are not prepossessing, not pretty, don't have a particularly high IQ, a decent education, or other noticeable assets." But never mind all that—she's a mouseburger herself and she's made it, and so can you if you follow her advice.

In her breathless, condescending tone (the reader is always "my dear," "my poor darling," or "my pussycat"), Gurley Brown dispenses such words of wisdom as "it's okay to feel no real sense of responsibility in your early work life." But her most dangerous advice is on health and appearance. She is obsessed about her looks. She complains about being five-foot-four and 110 pounds. She tells her readers it's okay to crash diet and thinks "you may have to have a tiny touch of anorexia nervosa to maintain an ideal weight. . . not a heavy case, just a little one!" And when she's not boasting about torturing her body by exercising the day after having a D&C or recommending Preparation H as an eye cream, she's pouting about not being beautiful.

No page is without some notable inanity—from her chapter on sex (which includes such soul-searching questions as, "Are you a nymphomaniac?") to another on love (why not ask your man for a copy of "that terrific letter he wrote to Consolidated Freightways about their new forklifts"; it'll show you care).

At the end she asks, "Do you not know people who, if they would

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give up some idiotic behavior, let in common sense and reason, would not be infinitely happier and more productive?" If we didn't before we read her book, we do now.

—Donna Fenn

It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: The Tragedy and Promise of America in the 1970s. *Peter N. Carroll. Holt, Rinehart & Winston, $19.95.*

ITT: The Management of Opportunity. *Robert Sobel. Times, $22.50.*

Media Unbound: The Impact of Television Journalism on the Public. *Stephen Lesher. Houghton Mifflin, $13.95.* This anecdote-laden, informed look at the author's own profession is refreshingly candid. Journalists say too much too soon, aren't selective enough, jump at confrontation, and want to direct and save us where they should only inform and entertain, he says. Much of the book focuses on "60 Minutes," which Lesher uses as a case study to illustrate the best and the worst of TV journalism.

—Sharon Krauss

Leaders: Profiles and Reminiscences of Men Who Have Shaped the Modern World. *Richard Nixon. Warner, $17.50.*

None of the Above: Why Presidents Fail and What Can Be Done. *Robert Shogan. NAL, $14.95.* Shogan's account of the last six presidencies spots familiar troubles: the impotence of political parties, the rise of special interests and the politics of personality. What is fresh is Shogan's willingness to trace these disastrous phenomena to their source: the basic political ground rules established in the Constitution. "The Founding Fathers made the task of parties difficult if not impossible," he argues, "by ordaining a permanent antagonism between the executive and the legislature which transcends party allegiance."

Faced with the "institutional obstacle course created by the Constitution," John Kennedy turned to foreign adventures, while Lyndon Johnson sought a non-partisan consensus by promising everything to everybody ("We're for a lot of things, and we're against mighty few," LBJ once said). When Nixon became frustrated with the impediments to his power, he resorted to illegality. Even Ronald Reagan's initial successes, Shogan argues, are but temporary exceptions to the general rule of stalemate and impotence—indeed, according to Shogan, the party system (and therefore the government) has never worked very well. If at times he seems to be stretching—as when he claims strong parties would have prevented the Civil War as well as the Vietnam war—his overall case is persuasive.

When it comes to solutions, Shogan bluntly notes that without changing the basic constitutional rules, "nothing much" can be done to make the two elected branches work together under party discipline. He also wisely rejects some of the more respectable constitutional non-solutions, like the single six-year presidential term. Instead, he lists a variety of proposed amendments that would make it more likely that one party controlled both the White House and Congress, and could therefore be held accountable for the actions of the government.

Unfortunately, Shogan avoids a thorough discussion of the pros and cons of these proposals. Some — like a plan to elect 100 at-large members of the House—seem messy. Others, like eliminating primaries and letting party leaders choose presidential candidates, seem undemocratic. And nobody seems to know what to do with the Senate, the one constitutional institution specifically protected from amendment.

Shogan and his fellow constitutional reformers (Lloyd Cutler, for one) have had the temerity to ask the right questions; the answers, however, need some more work.

—Robert M. Kaus

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Nor Any Drop to Drink. *William Ashworth. Summit, $18.75/$8.25.*

Open Road: Truckin' on the Biting Edge. *Axel Madsen. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, $12.95.*

Report from Afghanistan. *Gerard Chaliand. Viking, $13.95.* Aside from a brief recounting of its history as a British colony, this tiny (90 pages) and overpriced book reveals little that's new or interesting about Afghanistan. Even more distressing is Chaliand's gloomy conclusion that the Soviet Union is willing to remain in Afghanistan long enough to turn the country into a vassal state like Mongolia.

—David Schellhase

The Sporty Game. *John Newhouse. Knopf, $14.95.* A rare example of liberal empathy for the struggles of corporate America—in this case the commercial aircraft industry. A very important book.

—C.P.

Straight Talk About American Education. *Theodore M. Black. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, $14.95.* One of the most dismaying failures of American liberalism lies in its allowing the right wing to assume the initiative in calling attention to the deterioration of our public schools. This book illustrates the sorry result. Black, a former chancellor of the New York State Board of Regents, correctly identifies many of public education's most serious problems: a decline in academic standards; poorly educated and incompetent teachers who are protected by powerful teachers' unions; the refusal to remove disruptive children from class so the remainder can learn. But between his trenchant criticisms, the author trots out an assortment of far right canards that would send even moderate Republicans scurrying for cover. An entire chapter excoriates mandatory sex education classes and abortion (comparing the latter to the Holocaust); in another, the preposterous claim that all sovereignity stems from the states is used to attack the perniciousness of federal aid to education. His strangest crusade is against Halloween—a night of "institutionalized extortion."

Such outbursts unfortunately serve to discredit Black's valid insights and let those who should share much of the blame for public education's plight—particularly teachers' unions and colleges—off the hook. Until liberals realize that many of their educational "allies" are part of the problem, and that the real victims of bad schools are the poor and oppressed children whose cause they ostensibly champion, public schools will continue to get worse.

—P.K.

Success by Design: The Real Reasons Behind Japan's Economic Miracle. *Frank Gibney. Times, $16.95.*

Yesterday's Wings. *Joseph E. Brown. Doubleday, $19.95.*

War in Space. *James Canan. Putnam, $13.95.*

The Wall Street Journal. *Lloyd Wendt. Rand McNally, $16.95.*

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(*continued from page 8*)
he could reasonably do to avert it. . . .

When you're discussing social security reform with senior citizens, you often hear the "I've paid for it" argument. Next time remember this fact: the average social security recipient is paid back his entire life's contribution within two years after retirement. . . .

Another argument often made is that elderly social security recipients are needier than the rest of the population. This ignores the tax break they get that the rest of us don't and the fact that most of their homes are fully paid for, relieving them of what is the major financial burden for the rest of us. And, according to a study prepared for the American Economics Association by John B. Shoven of Stanford and Michael Hurd of SUNY-Stony Brook, the aged on a per capita basis are fiscally as well-off as or better-off than the rest of us.

What all this adds up to is that we should focus our economic help on the poor as a group, including the elderly, not on the elderly as a group, including the well-off. . . .

As Congress continues to avoid the great debate that must take place on social security, the Democrats are displaying their statesmanship with a television ad featuring scissors clipping away at a social security card and a voice saying, "It isn't fair. It's Republican.". . .

The New York Times is doing a lot better than the Democrats. On August 11 its lead editorial was entitled, "Link Social Security to Need." The *Times* also ran an excellent long article under the headline "Deteriorating Public Facilities Are Held a Threat to the Nation's Economy." It didn't quite come out for our call to revive the WPA, but the *Times*' heart is clearly in the right place. . . .

Other new allies for old *Washington Monthly* causes: Jane Bryant Quinn in *Newsweek* attacked bloated military pensions, for which our unfunded indebtedness is now $590 billion and which encourage people to spend more years on pensions than they do on active duty.

And the Internal Revenue Service, of all people, has come out in favor of our ten-year-old proposal to call in the big bills. Recalling $100 bills to change their color or discontinue them would enable the government to identify and catch the drug-pushers, gamblers, and other tax evaders who deal almost exclusively in cash and who, if the government required an exchange, would either have to come forward or lose their ill-gotten gains. . . .

We may tell you the bad, but we also tell you the good about the career government service. One example:

Just a couple of years ago 99 percent of America had never heard of Philip Habib. But *Washington Monthly* readers had read about him over 13 years ago. In our first issue, in February 1969, Bill Moyers described how Lyndon Johnson was persuaded to abandon the escalation in Vietnam:

"For much of his information, the president depended on his line officers, his cabinet. As a staff officer, I spent more time with the younger staff officers, my counterparts in the large departments, who were each day sifting information and intelligence that did not always get to the president. Now, from the president's viewpoint, raw data is sometimes essential information. . . .

"The story about how the president came to the conclusion to reverse the military escalation in Vietnam is a very good example. The president had the outside 'wise men' come in to sift through the government and talk to those who might give them some advice in terms of advising him. And they talked to three or four young men like George Carver and Phil Habib, who was an expert at the State Department on Vietnam, and the next day, when these wise men reported to the president, he said something like, 'With whom did you talk?' Whereupon he insisted that these same men, whom he'd not been able to spend much time with before but who had been providing a lot of the raw material for the intelligence evaluations, be brought to see him.

"He spent a good part of the next day, the press reported, talking with these men about their views of the war. White House assistants should be in constant touch with the George Carvers and the Phil Habibs."

My fear is that the Reagan White House is in touch with the Philip Habibs of today, the people at the top of the career service, but not with the people down below—the Philip Habibs as they were 13 years ago. These are the people who know the facts about places like El Salvador that could turn into new Vietnams.

Moyers's advice is equally important on the domestic side. The people down below usually know more about what's going on in places like Dixon, Illinois, than the people at the top.

—*Charles Peters*

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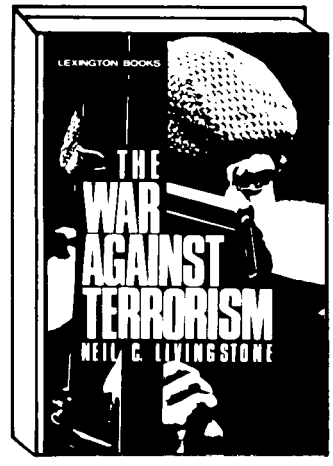

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